



Manual

OF THE
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Frederic Ozanam encouraged the compilation of the first edition of the **Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul** in September 1845. This tradition has lived on, and now the **2007 edition of the Manual for the United States** is offered to the members for their formation in the spirit and charism of St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic. It is recommended for personal prayer as well as for reflection and sharing at Society meetings.

*This Manual is a companion document
to the Rule and Bylaws, and serves as the basis
for the Ozanam Orientation.*



Manual

OF THE
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
IN THE UNITED STATES

National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.

CHAPTER 4

Vincentian Saints and Blessed

4.1 SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL (1581-1660)

Vincent de Paul is the patron of the Society that bears his name. In 1885, Pope Leo XIII named Vincent patron of all works of charity, and therefore he is also known as the “Apostle of Charity” and the “Father of the Poor.”

Beginnings

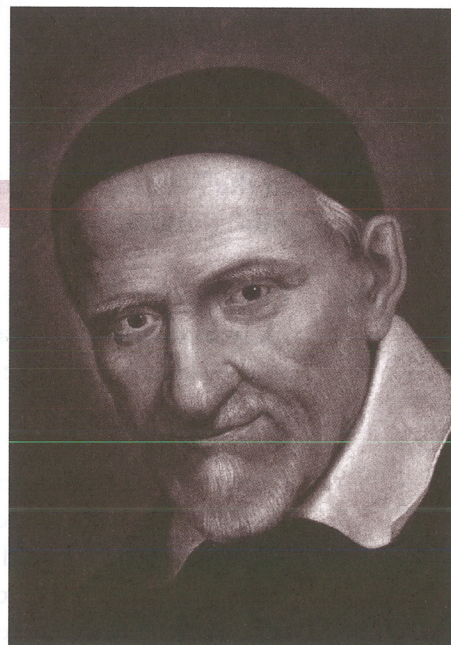
Vincent de Paul was born April 24, 1581 in Pouy, a village of southwest France near the historic city of Dax, in the Landes district of Gascony, not far from the Pyrenees and the northern border of Spain. His birthplace is now known as the village of “Saint Vincent de Paul.”

Vincent was the third child of Jean de Paul and Bertrande de Moras, a peasant couple with six children: four boys and two girls. The de Pauls owned their own farm, but lived simply without many comforts. As a youngster, Vincent worked the fields and shepherded the animals. Shepherds in that area used stilts to move about the marshy land. Vincent never lost his love for the simplicity of country life.

His mother’s character and femininity influenced Vincent greatly. As a child, he saw in her face the sacredness of love. From her, he received inspiration to ground his future work in a radical and passionate love for the poor.

Priesthood

Recognizing his son’s intellectual talents and pleasing personality, and the limited opportunity in their village, Jean de Paul in 1595 enrolled Vincent in a Franciscan boarding school at nearby Dax with the expectation that Vincent would become a priest. To rural people without much hope of advancement, the priesthood was a plausible path to prosperity. In Dax, a lawyer named Comet took an interest in Vincent and hired him to tutor his children, and thus the education of youth became an important part of Vincent’s mission.



Vincent registered at the University of Toulouse. To provide his son's tuition, Mr. de Paul sold a pair of oxen. In 1596, Vincent took the first steps to priesthood: Tonsure and Minor Orders. He was ordained on September 23, 1600, by the old bishop of Perigueux, France. Vincent was scarcely 19 years old, and still a student at Toulouse.

As an ordained priest, Vincent was now in a position to seek a benefice, an ecclesiastical post to which property or a fixed income was attached. He continued his studies, accepting boarding students at his residence to make enough money for his expenses. While tutoring, Vincent pursued a degree in theology, which he received on October 12, 1604. About this time, he inherited a good sum of money. Things were going well.

Settling in Paris, Vincent secured lodging at the royal court with the chaplains of Queen Marguerite, a connection that failed to benefit him financially. Still looking for a golden benefice, he wrote his mother that he remained hopeful of providing for her and the family with a fixed income.

Vincent then suffered a dark night of the soul. After a time, he promised that if God would take away this darkness he would dedicate his life to the service of the poor. Instantly, the anguish left him. It never returned, and Vincent faithfully fulfilled his vow to the poor till the day he died!

Vincent the Parish Priest

Father Pierre de Berulle, famous founder of the French School of Spirituality, became Vincent's spiritual director. De Berulle got Vincent a pastorate at Clichy, outside of Paris. For the first time in the twelve years since ordination, he was able to function as a priest. He took over the parish on May 12, 1612 and was never happier. Again, Vincent took in some boarders, aspirants to the priesthood, one of whom would become his right-hand man when he started his own community of priests and brothers. Vincent was now 32 years old and in the prime of life, but he was still searching for something.

Vincent left the parish of Clichy to assume responsibility for the education and formation of the son of one of the most prestigious families in Europe, the de Gondis. Count Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi was the general of the royal galleys. His wife, Madame Francoise-Marguerite, was a woman of nobility in her own right. She chose Vincent for her spiritual director. Madame de Gondi invited Vincent to accompany her on trips around her vast properties in order to minister to the poor on their lands. During one such journey to the village of Folleville in 1617, Vincent's vow of service to the poor was reinforced when he heard the confession of a dying man. The man told Madame de Gondi that he would have been damned if it had not been for Vincent.

At Madame de Gondi's insistence, Vincent drew up a program for the sacrament of reconciliation with a particular focus on the general confession of one's life. On January 25, 1617, he spoke on the subject to the people of Folleville. Assisted by several priests, he conducted the parish mission and, in the process, discovered his own mission.

His spiritual director, Pierre de Berulle, supported Vincent's wish to leave the de Gondis and suggested that he take over a parish near Lyon, Chatillon-les-Dombes, where he was installed on August 1, 1617. Here Vincent founded the Confraternity of Charity, later called "The Ladies of Charity," gathering the women of the parish into a group to serve the sick and the poor. Vincent himself wrote their first Rule, which was approved by the Vicar General of Lyon on November 24, 1617. The Confraternity of Charity was formally established on December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Vincent's vision and vocation were now transformed and he had surrendered his life to God in service to the poor.

Man with a Mission

In faith Vincent followed Divine Providence "step by step." But the de Gondis wanted Vincent back, and his spiritual director requested that he return to Paris. Ever obedient, Vincent complied. Vincent secured a new spiritual director, André Duval, a professor at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was becoming more engaged in the service of the poor and felt the need to establish institutions to achieve his mission, which he now saw as the continuation of Jesus' own!

Vincent met Francis de Sales and a solid friendship developed. De Sales asked Vincent to become the spiritual father of his Visitation Nuns. Vincent also became spiritual director of the future saint Jane Frances de Chantal, the co-founder of the Visitation. After Francis de Sales' death in 1622, Vincent continued these roles for many years.

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi entrusted the prison inmates and galley slaves to Vincent. Louis XIII appointed him the general chaplain of the galleys on February 8, 1619. Vincent quickly went to work conducting visits and missions.

Vincent's mind was clear: the poor were his lords and masters. The de Gondis endowed Vincent's work on April 17, 1625 with a large sum of money. The Archbishop of Paris approved Vincent's community of priests and brothers, the Congregation of the Mission (CM), also known as Vincentians, on April 24, 1626. Soon after, Vincent took the first steps for Vatican approval. The purposes of his community were to preach the Gospel to the poor country people and to educate and form good priests. Rome approved the community in 1633.

Expansion of the Vincentian Ministry

In 1625, in the Providence of God, Vincent was sent to serve as spiritual advisor to Louise de Marillac, a widow with a 13-year-old son. As wife, mother, and widow, Louise welcomed the grace of God into her life, allowing her fretful heart to be transformed into a courageous, generous, and compassionate one. She loved intensely, welcoming poor, hopeless, alienated, and abandoned people. In 1629, Vincent sent her to organize, direct, and animate the Confraternities of Charity and the Ladies of Charity. Louise was able to do this because she loved and hoped in God.

On November 29, 1633, following the steps of Providence and under the guidance of St. Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac took a small group of women into her own home to form a community of total dedication: "Given to God for the Service of the Poor." Thus were the Daughters of Charity founded. Louise trained these Sisters to read, to write, and to serve the poor in health care, social ministry, and education. Above all, she rooted the Daughters of Charity in the Vincentian spirituality of finding Jesus in the poor and the poor in Jesus, teaching them to be contemplatives in action. She taught the Sisters to serve the poor "with respect, mildness, cordiality, and compassion."

As a priest, Vincent was able to motivate many 17th century women to give their talents and skills in service to the Church, especially for the poor and abandoned. "For the last 800 years or so," he observed to the Ladies of Charity, "women have had no public employment in the Church ... your sex was deprived of all such employment ... now observe how ... Providence turns to some of you today to supply all that the sick poor ... stand in need of."

Each year more than 300 children were left on the streets of Paris, many of them sold for a pittance to beggars and deformed by them to further their schemes. In 1638, Vincent built houses to care for these abused and neglected street children, and Louise formed the Daughters of Charity to serve and love these poor orphans.

All these charitable works brought Vincent into the limelight. People of power paid attention to him; politicians sought him out for advice. Bishops and priests came to him for education and formation. Vincent capitalized on his encounters with the powerful to plead for the poor. Louis XIII asked Vincent for a list of those priests that he judged to be the best candidates for the episcopacy. When the Council of Conscience was formed in June 1643, the 62-year-old Vincent was included, at the insistence of Queen Anne of Austria.

Vincent's ministry kept growing, as did his organizations. His followers buried the dead, cared for refugees and orphans, took care of the sick in their homes and in the hospital, and opened schools for poor children.

The number of beggars increased to more than 100,000 in the city of Paris. In two districts alone, nearly 24,000 families lived in squalor. A hundred persons died daily at Hotel Dieu hospital in Paris. More than 10,000 deaths per month were reported citywide.

Vincent, now 72 years old, met the escalating needs as best he could, always refining his charitable methods and keeping everyone informed by issuing reports on his activities. Vincent organized collections, using wagons to gather donations from merchants. Each week, his followers distributed clothing and thousands of pounds of food in numerous neighborhoods, using rectories as warehouses and distribution centers.

The End

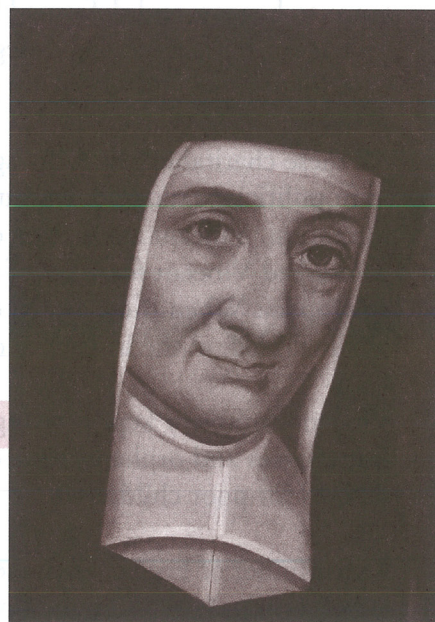
Sickness confined Vincent to his room in July 1660. Nevertheless, he struggled on with his work. His dream, his prayer, was to die not in bed but in battle, fighting for the poor. Early on the morning of September 27, 1660, just days after celebrating 60 years as a priest, Vincent died in his chair. He went home, joining the Eternal Priest, Jesus Christ.

The process of Vincent's beatification officially began in 1705; the ceremonies were conducted in Rome on August 21, 1729. Vincent de Paul was canonized by Pope Clement XII on June 16, 1737.

St. Vincent's Feast Day is celebrated on September 27th.

4.2 SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC (1591-1660)

Vincentian spirituality and charism are rooted in the collaboration, mutuality, and friendship of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Louise de Marillac was a wife, mother, widow, teacher, nurse, social worker, and founder. She was an organizer, a radical thinker who lived her life intensely and enthusiastically. Louise was a woman with a deep faith in divine providence and her quest in life was to do the will of God. She knew suffering, but she also knew love. Through this suffering and love, she became a mystic in action.



The Beginning

Louise was born on August 12, 1591, when her father, Louis de Marillac, was a thirty-five-year-old widower. The true identity of her mother remains unknown; most likely, Louise was born out of wedlock and was, in the eyes of the law, illegitimate. Her mother was probably a servant in the de Marillac household, prohibited by social custom from marrying. As an infant, Louise was placed in a Dominican convent-school at Poissy and was never to know the love and security of belonging to a family. But her father genuinely loved Louise and would often visit her. At Poissy, Louise received a solid education in philosophy, theology, Latin, Greek, and literature. She was also immersed in Dominican and mystical spirituality and prayer.

When Louise was twelve years old, her father died and she lost the one person who loved her and to whom she belonged. At this time, she was removed from the convent school at Poissy and placed in a boarding school in Paris, where she received a practical education that included cooking, housekeeping, and sewing. Life was completely different for Louise now.

The religious renewal then occurring in France awakened in Louise a desire to consecrate herself to God. At the age of twenty, she asked permission to enter the cloistered community of the Daughters of the Passion. Afraid that Louise's precarious health would not allow her to endure the austerity of the rule, the superior of the Capuchins refused her request with these prophetic words: "God has other designs on you."

Marriage

On February 5, 1613, Louise married Antoine LeGras, a secretary to the queen, Marie de Medici. Because Louise was illegitimate, the de Marillac family refused to arrange her marriage to someone in the nobility. As Antoine was of the middle class, Louise became Mademoiselle LeGras, instead of Madame. Louise was twenty-two, Antoine thirty-two. Although their marriage had been arranged, as was the custom of the day, true love grew between them. With Antoine, Louise found the joy and warmth of a family home, which was brightened by the birth of a son, Michel Antoine.

Louise loved Michel, through whose infancy she came to know the profound joys of motherhood. Born prematurely, Michel had difficulty developing, and learned slowly. Louise worried about him constantly.

Seven years after their marriage, Antoine's health began to deteriorate, probably due to tuberculosis. He became despondent and angry. Louise loved and cared for her husband, but feared that she was to blame for all of his distress. At a time when divine justice was a major spiritual theme, Louise turned to anxious introspection, became obsessed with her distress, and entered a dark night of the soul. On Pentecost Sunday, May 5, 1623 she received a "Light" of the Holy Spirit that brought her great peace:

"My mind was instantly freed of all doubt. I was advised that a time would come when I would be in a position to make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and that I would be in a small community where others would do the same. I then understood that I would be in a place where I could help my neighbor, but I did not understand how this would be possible, since there was to be much coming and going."

Because all communities of religious women lived in cloisters at this time, Louise did not understand how women with vows could be serving the poor "coming and going" in the streets of Paris.

For more than two years after her "Light of Pentecost," Louise remained constantly at the side of her dying husband. With a heavy heart, she buried him on December 21, 1625. Grief, loneliness, and feelings of abandonment nearly overwhelmed Louise. She faced her future in fear, deeply worried about how she was to raise Michel, her twelve-year-old son, alone.

Vincent de Paul

At this time, in the Providence of God, Vincent de Paul was sent to Louise to become her spiritual director. In the beginning, Vincent and Louise had scant appreciation for each other, but both strove to be obedient to God's apparent will. In time, Vincent indeed became the guide and mentor of Louise. Ten years her senior, he had made the journey of faith, been tried by many fires, and had his heart burned clean. Vincent listened to Louise and understood her suffering. As he grew to know her, he discovered how much the rejections of her early life and the death of her husband had scarred her. He also discovered in her a great desire to know and to accomplish the will of God. As they became friends, Vincent taught Louise how to trust in God and in herself. Their friendship would revolutionize the religious life of the Catholic Church and its ministry to the poor.

Vincent described to Louise his work among poor people, telling her about the Confraternities of Charity that he had begun in 1617. One principle guided the work of these charities: The poor are Jesus Christ. Vincent insisted that the personal service given to them be compassionate, gentle, respectful, devoted, and heartfelt. These Confraternities of Charity were composed of women in country parishes easing the misery of the sick poor in their homes. Vincent had also organized the Ladies of Charity, a group of wealthy women in Paris, to serve the poor. These women of the nobility contributed generously of their time and money, but would often send their servants to perform the menial tasks.

Louise gradually immersed herself in the work of the Confraternities and the Ladies of Charity. She guided, organized, and animated the Confraternities and rooted the members in the spirituality of their service. Vincent relied heavily on her spirituality, judgment, and organizational ability. Little by little, Louise gained confidence in God and in herself. Her mystic journey continued, and love for God burned quietly in her soul. Deep down, a healing process began to mend her shattered heart, restore her faith, and unlock the creative potential hidden within her. As God led Louise to the poor, charity burned in her heart so that she found and treasured Christ in the broken hearts, spirits, and bodies of the destitute people she served.

The Daughters of Charity

In 1630, while Vincent was preaching a mission, a woman named Marguerite Naseau came to him and asked to help serve the poor. Marguerite was a peasant woman, thirty-two years old, who had taught herself how to read and then gone about the countryside teaching young girls. Sent by Vincent to Louise, she began to work with the Ladies of Charity in Paris. Her example was contagious; soon other young women came to work with Louise, wanting to serve the poor.

Louise knew that these young women required a strong formation, rooted in prayer, to persevere in their service. She also believed that they would find God in the poor and the poor in God by faith alone. And she recognized that they would need mutual support and encouragement, a community to belong to, so that they could dedicate themselves to the service of poor, abandoned, orphaned, sick, and illiterate people.

On November 29, 1633, after years of praying and discerning with Vincent, Louise welcomed into her home several young women who expressed their love of God and a desire to live in community to serve the poor. In the providence of God, the Company of the Daughters of Charity was born. Louise began to see her "Light of Pentecost" become a reality as Vincent explained the vocation of the Daughter of Charity:

"You will have for a convent the houses of the sick; for a cell a hired room; for a chapel your parish church; for cloister the streets of the city; for enclosure, obedience ... for a grille, the fear of God; for veil, holy modesty; making no other form of profession to assure your vocation than the continual confidence you have in divine providence and the offering you make to God of all that you are and your service in the person of the poor."

The mission of her Daughters of Charity was to the sick poor in their homes, to foundlings (orphans), to the sick in hospitals, to young children in schools, to prisoners, to the mentally ill, and to the elderly. As their collaboration increased, Louise and Vincent discovered and developed their complementarity, combining daring initiative with prudent planning and constancy. Vincent provided the original vision of service to the poor, a vision shaped by the love of Jesus Christ. Louise helped transform that vision into reality.

Finally, in 1650, Louise found peace with her son, Michel, when he married and settled down. She then enjoyed the happiness of grandmotherhood when Louise-Renee was born.

The End

Louise died on March 15, 1660. Her final words to her Daughters echoes down through the centuries: "Take good care of the poor." Her motto for them still resonates: "The Charity of Christ crucified urges us." Louise knew it was the love of Christ that urged her, and her Daughters, to go to the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the downtrodden, the imprisoned, the uneducated, and the underprivileged. The Daughters of Charity continue her legacy of charity, by serving wherever poor people need their help.

Louise de Marillac was beatified by Pope Benedict XV on May 9, 1920 and canonized by Pope Pius XI on March 11, 1934. Pope John XXIII named Louise the Patron of all Christian Social Workers on February 10, 1960.

St. Louise's Feast Day is celebrated on March 15th.

4.3 BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM (1813-1853)

Recognized as the prime founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Blessed Frederic was that rare individual who exhibits both intellectual genius and extraordinary holiness. Husband and father, professor and researcher, journalist and author, apologist and defender of the faith, he was, above all, a Good Samaritan.



Beginnings

Antoine Frederic Ozanam was born on April 23, 1813 in Milan, Italy, to which his father and mother had temporarily relocated. From the region of Lyon, France, Jean Antoine Francois Ozanam and Marie Nantas were devout Catholics who handed on to Frederic from his childhood a deep love of God and the poor. They taught him to seek Christ in those who bore the burden of human suffering and social injustice.

Frederic enjoyed a happy childhood. Not surprisingly, however, his first contact with philosophy challenged his sharp intelligence and filled him with uncertainty. At the height of this crisis of faith, Frederic promised that if God took away the darkness he would give his life to the service of truth. Instantly, his doubts against faith ended. Frederic fulfilled his vow faithfully until the day he died. His mentor, Fr. Joseph Mathias Noiro, later helped Frederic in the explication of philosophy, strengthening him in the faith he so loved.

City of Paris

When Frederic graduated from secondary school at the Royal College of Lyon, he moved to Paris to study law, as his father wished. There, he was confronted with a society in deep turmoil. The French Revolution had left its ugly, lasting mark. At first, Paris displeased Frederic. He wrote on December 18, 1831 that there was no life, no faith, no love to be found in the city. Frederic perceived Paris as a dead body to which he, a youth full of energy, was tied. Its coldness chilled him, and its corruption was killing him!

In God's Providence, Frederic met the famous Andre-Marie Ampere, who would become a second father to him. Ampere opened his heart and hearth to Frederic, helping him to overcome loneliness and homesickness. He began to see Paris in a different light, coming to an unshakable certitude: Christianity is the only remedy to heal the evils of today's society; its scientific and historical truth must be demonstrated.

While in Lyon, before he had reached his 18th birthday, Frederic had begun work on a vast tome entitled: *Demonstration of Truth and of the Catholic Religion by the Antiquity of Historical, Religious, and Moral Beliefs*. The title would undergo various changes, but the student and, later, the professor would eventually fulfill his youthful dream!

Pursuit of Truth and Social Justice

In Paris, Frederic often worked fifteen hours a day, learning foreign languages and studying religions other than Catholicism. He gathered around him students of like mind and faith and confronted the faculty members of the Sorbonne who attacked their beliefs. Frederic and several friends approached the Archbishop of Paris, Hyacinthe Louis de Quelen, imploring him to let Father Henri Lacordaire deliver a series of conferences in Notre Dame Cathedral. The purpose was to nourish and deepen the faith of the countless students who were hearing more falsehood than truth. Frederic persisted until the archbishop consented. Success was overwhelming, and the "Conferences of Notre Dame" were launched!

Gifted with intuition, sensitivity, and tact, Frederic, from his childhood, was affected by the harsh, unfair conditions of the lower social classes. Nineteen years before the abolition of slavery in the French colonies and overseas territories, promulgated on April 27, 1848, the barely sixteen-year-old Frederic vigorously denounced the inhumanity of servitude! Later, still twelve years before Karl Marx's 1848 manifesto, Frederic deplored the widening gulf between the powerful and the weak, prophesying against the coming clash between them. Frederic wrote that what divides people are not political structures but social issues.

These ideas were promoted in the *Tribune Catholique*, a newspaper founded in January 1832 by Emmanuel Bailly. To the newspaper was linked a literary circle, "The Society of Good Studies," whose aim was to develop, among Catholics, a taste for historical, philosophical, and religious research. This society, later known as "The Conference of History," fulfilled Frederic's dream of "a gathering of friends working together for the advance of learning" in the light of Christian thought. He and his companions became active members and developed it into a forum of great discussion and research.

One Saturday morning, Frederic and his friends were confronted by a fellow student advocating the ideas of the "Saint-Simonians" and found it difficult to answer his challenge: "What is your Church doing today to meet the needs of society?" Frederic and his companions knew that they must concretize their faith in action, that they must evangelize like the apostles: not only by words, but by the constant practice of charity. Frederic rallied them with this exhortation: "The blessing of the poor is that of God ... let us go to the poor."

Birth of the Society

On April 23, 1833, his twentieth birthday, Frederic and five other students met with their mentor, Emmanuel Bailly, in the office of The Catholic Tribune. There they established the "Conference of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul," soon to be called "The Society of St. Vincent de Paul," and elected Bailly as their first president. Resolved to respond to Christ's call by dedicating themselves to the poor after the example of St. Vincent de Paul, they asked Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, for the names and addresses of several families in need. Sr. Rosalie, known as "The Mother of the Poor" in the Mouffetard Quarter of Paris, taught Frederic much about the poor and how to minister to them with love and respect. The first members of the Society were determined to bring not only bread but friendship to the poor.

Frederic was beginning to make a name for himself professionally. Acquiring a doctorate in law in 1836, he assumed a barrister's career, and then became professor of commercial law in Lyon. In 1839, he received his doctorate in literature. He came in first in the competitive examination of the Faculty of Arts and Literature at the Sorbonne. Frederic became Assistant to Professor Claude Fauriel in 1841 and succeeded him in 1844 as Professor of Foreign Literature.

The Love of His Life

Frederic met Amelie Soulacroix and the two fell in love and were married, at Saint Nizier Church in Lyon on June 23, 1841. Frederic's brother Alphonse, the priest, witnessed the sacrament; brother Charles, the medical doctor, served. The Ozanams' daughter, Marie, was born on July 24, 1845 and she was the apple of her father's eye. Frederic spent hours teaching her. His life was now devoted to family, teaching, research, writing, and various civic, social, and religious commitments.



Frederic had a passion for scholarship and published several outstanding works reflecting his reserved emotion and apostolic fire: "Thesis on Dante," "Franciscan Poets," and "Germanic Studies." He was also a remarkable teacher, imbued with a deep sense of duty. Rooted in faith and trust in God, this frail man, loving father, attentive husband, prodigious writer, and teacher was able to fulfill his many heavy responsibilities while being fully devoted to the Society he founded.

His best friend, Jean-Jacques Ampere, painted a vibrant picture of Frederic as a professor whose dedication to his students knew no limits. "It is rather unusual," he emphasized, "to find at the same level the two strengths a professor should have: form and substance, knowledge and eloquence."

Hersart de Villemarque embellished Ampere's tribute: "God alone knows the immense good that Ozanam brought through his lectures, which costs him so much wear and tear. He knew how to inspire this youthful audience, which listened to him, with determination in work, resoluteness, useful tasks, fine vocations! He was cheered passionately; he was loved even more. When he would leave the faculty, everyone rushed to have a word with him, to hear him again; they escorted him along the paths in the Luxembourg Gardens which he crossed on his way home. He was exhausted but often brought home with him the joys he prized above the most enthusiastic applause."

Although he was tough toward the intolerant, those who considered themselves the exclusive champions of truth, and did not hesitate to put such people down, Frederic had tremendous respect for the opinions of others, even those contrary to his own. "Let us learn to stand up for our convictions without hating our opponents," he urged, "to love those who think differently from ourselves." Persuasion was his method for winning people over. "If anything consoles me on leaving this earth before having done what I would have liked," he observed near the end of his life, "it is that I have never worked for men's praise, but in the service of truth."

The Society and Social Justice

Frederic's influence continued to expand beyond the Sorbonne. Through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, he came into contact with the world of workers and the real sufferings of the working classes. Frederic studied the problem with typical precision and conscientiousness. This excerpt from his correspondence of November 1836 to February 1848 reveals his mind: "I request that we take care of the people who have too many needs and not enough rights, who rightly claim a greater share in public affairs, guarantees for work and against poverty."

Frederic was one of the first Catholics of the 19th century to formulate the idea of a "natural salary" that would provide compensation against unemployment and accidents and guarantee pensions to workers. A number of Frederic's ideas can be discerned in Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

Although an intellectual, Frederic was also a man of action. He wanted to set up a true Christian democracy in harmony with the principles of justice and charity. For this, he relied on the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Frederic was convinced that personal contact with and direct service to the needy were the Society's main responsibilities, and that its ultimate objective was the spiritual, moral, and human development of each individual.

The End

Excessive work over the years took its toll, forcing Frederic to rest. In 1852, he and Amelie went to Italy, but his condition continued to deteriorate. Although he felt the attraction of eternity, the thought of leaving his loved ones cast a pall over him. In Pisa, on his fortieth birthday, April 23, 1853, four and a half months before his death, he abandoned himself to the will of God. Close to death, Frederic insisted on returning to France. Leaving Italy, he cried out: "My God, I thank you for the sufferings and the afflictions you have sent me in this house."

On August 31, 1853, they boarded the steamship "Industrie" at the port of Livorno, landing September 2nd at Marseille, where Amelie's relatives and members of the Society greeted them. Although terribly weak, he was happy to be back in his own country. Frederic was too weak to go on to Paris, so Amelie and the family rented a residence.

On September 8, 1853, the feast of the Birthday of the Blessed Mother, to whom he had such a great devotion, Frederic breathed his last. His parting words were: "Oh Lord, Oh Lord, have mercy on me." He is buried in the crypt of the Church of St. Joseph-des-Carmes at the Catholic Institute of Paris, surrounded by the young students of the university to whom he had given so much of himself.

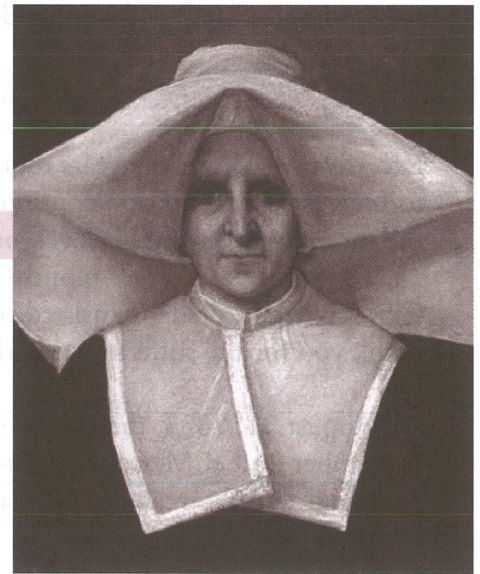
The Beatification

The cause for the beatification of Frederic Ozanam was begun on March 15, 1925, the Feast of St. Louise de Marillac, in the Archdiocese of Paris, and in Rome on January 12, 1954. By his decree of July 6, 1993, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Frederic “Venerable” on the heroicity of his virtues. Three years later, June 25, 1996, the Holy Father signed a decree recognizing the miracle obtained through the intercession of Frederic in favor of an eighteen-month-old Brazilian boy suffering from diphtheria. The miraculously healed Fernando Luiz Benedicto Ottoni is the grandson of a Vincentian who gathered fellow Vincentians to pray for him. Pope John Paul II beatified Antoine Frederic Ozanam in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on Friday morning, August 22, 1997, during World Youth Day.

Blessed Frederic Ozanam's Feast Day is celebrated on September 9th.

4.4 BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU (1786-1856)

Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, is recognized as a co-founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. She mentored the founding members of the Society in the spirit and heritage of St. Vincent and St. Louise.



Beginnings

Jeanne-Marie Rendu was born in 1786 in the village of Comfort in Gex, France. She was the oldest of four girls. Her simple, faith-filled parents were small property owners who enjoyed a certain affluence and true respect throughout the area.

Jeanne Marie was three years old when France suffered first from Revolution and then from the Napoleonic Wars, which caused much oppression and upheaval in the country. From 1790 it was compulsory for the clergy to take a civil oath of support for the government. Numerous priests, faithful to the Church, refused to take this oath. Some were put to death; others hid to escape capture. With deep faith and trust in God, the Rendu family faced grave danger by becoming a refuge for these priests. Thus, the Bishop of Annecy took refuge in the Rendu household and became “Peter, the Gardener,” Jeanne-Marie’s friend. In this atmosphere of solid faith, Jeanne Marie was formed, making her first Communion one night by candlelight in the basement of her home. From childhood, Jeanne-Marie learned concern for others from her parent’s example.

A Daughter of Charity

Jeanne-Marie attended boarding school under the Ursulines and worked in the hospital of Gex. There in the hospital, she saw a portrait of St. Vincent de Paul and, although not quite 16, felt called to become a Daughter of Charity. On May 25, 1802, Jeanne-Marie Rendu began her life as a Daughter of Charity in Paris.

After a period of formation, Jeanne Marie received the name of Sister Rosalie and was sent to the house of the Daughters of Charity in the Mouffetard district to begin her service to the poor. This area was the most impoverished district of Paris, with poverty in all its forms: psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual. Disease, unhealthy slums, and destitution were the daily lot of the people trying to survive there. Sr. Rosalie would remain here for 45 years.

The Mouffetard district was indeed one of the poorest of Paris: it had the most beggars in the streets, the most workers out of work, and the poorest lodgings; two-thirds of the population lacked firewood in the winter. Sister Rosalie untiringly cared for, fed, visited, consoled, and comforted the poor and destitute. She would often say, "There is something that is choking me and takes away my appetite ... the thought that so many families lack bread," and her feminine intuition would then suggest a solution. For the service of the poor, she dared to undertake everything with intelligence and boldness. Nothing would stop her.

Every day, in all kinds of weather, Sister Rosalie crisscrossed the streets and alleyways of the Mouffetard district, her rosary in her hand and a heavy basket of bread on her arm, walking with her God. She would speak to God of the families she was going to visit, praying for the relief of their sufferings. "Never," she observed, "have I prayed so well as in the streets." Daily she lived the words that St. Vincent de Paul spoke to the first Daughters of Charity: "You will go and visit the poor ten times a day, and ten times a day you will find God there!"

One of her Sisters affirmed the intensity of Rosalie's prayer life, noting that "she continually lived in the presence of God. She had a difficult mission to fulfill and we were always assured of seeing her go to the chapel or finding her on her knees in her office."

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Emmanuel Bailly, the eventual president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, sent Frederic Ozanam and Auguste Le Taillandier to Sr. Rosalie for guidance in their work of charity. She taught them to see Christ in his poor and to approach each with humility as Christ's servants. To Frederic and the founding members of the Society, Sister Rosalie said:

"God has already given you spiritual wisdom, or you would not be sacrificing your precious free day to his poor. Because you see Christ in his poor, I know you will approach each one you visit with humility, as his servant. Always remember, *messieurs*, that if we had lived through the hardships they have had to meet — if our childhood had been one of constant want — perhaps we, too, would have given way to envy and hatred as, I must admit, have many of the poor in this quarter. Be kind, and love, for love is your first gift you give to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you can bring them."

Sr. Rosalie referred to the office where she received the poor as her “parlor.” Here she received the first members of the Society, advising them with these words: “If you wish to be loved, you must love, and if you have nothing to give, give yourself.” It was not far from the Mouffetard district to the Latin Quarter, and so young people from all the schools, aspiring to all sorts of careers, could be seen in her office — students of law, medicine, education, and engineering, coming to serve the poor. Tenderly and respectfully, Sister Rosalie would accompany them, show concern for them, support them, and create a link between them and the families they visited, asking of each one what they could give to the service of the poor: to one, their pen; to another, their service; to another, their words; and to each, a few moments of their time.

Sr. Rosalie always recommended patience, mercy, and courtesy. “Love the poor, do not blame them too much ... remember that the poor are even more sensitive to your behavior than to help.” She taught Frederic and the first members of the Society how to make home visits and how to see Jesus in the poor. She gave them families to visit and advice on the Vincentian way to go to them: with respect and compassion.

It can be said of Sr. Rosalie that she had the “gift of humanness.” She was close to the poor, understood them, and loved them with her heart and with her faith; therein lay her secret. Moreover, to fight against injustice and poverty, she awakened the consciences of the powerful and the affluent. She was, indeed, a friend of the poor and the rich. “There are many ways of providing charity,” she would comment; “the assistance of money or assistance in kind that we give to the poor will not last long. We must aspire to a more complete and longer lasting benefit: study their abilities, their level of education, and try to get them jobs to help them out of their difficulties.”

During the Revolution of 1830, particularly the last days of July, Sr. Rosalie focused her attention on those who had suffered most from the revolt, collecting the wounded from both sides and nursing them back to health. Without any fear, she risked her life in these confrontations. Her courage commanded admiration.

During the Revolution of 1848, when Archbishop Denis Auguste Affre was mortally wounded on the barricade on July 25th, Sr. Rosalie made her way through the crowds, mounted the barricade, looked into the sea of faces racked with hatred, and cried out: “Stop this shooting! Haven’t I enough widows and orphans to care for now?” Her words had the desired effect, and peace was restored. In 1852, the French government presented the Cross of the Legion of Honor to “the Mother of the Poor,” Sr. Rosalie.

The destinies of Sr. Rosalie Rendu and Frederic Ozanam mingled in the love of the poor, forging lasting bonds between the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Daughters of Charity. In his book *Frederic Ozanam*, M.A. Hess affirms this intertwining: “It is scarcely imaginable to retrace the life and work of Frederic Ozanam without evoking the memory of Sister Rosalie, in so much as their collaboration was close in the service of the poor....The providential convergence of these two destinies has marked the history of charity in the nineteenth century.”

The End

Despite fragile health, Sister Rosalie never rested, always managing to overcome fatigue and fevers. But age, empathy, and overwork eventually undermined her strong resistance and weakened her health. During her last two years of life, she suffered from increasing blindness.

Sr. Rosalie died on February 7, 1856. A huge crowd of approximately 50,000 people, from every rank of society, flocked to her funeral. They came to show respect for her works and love for their “mother.” Both the well-off and the needy requested that she be buried in the cemetery of Montparnasse in Paris. The inscription on her tombstone reads: “To our good mother Rosalie, from her grateful friends, the poor and the rich.” To this day, flowers and prayers are brought to her gravesite, in an ongoing homage to this humble Daughter of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac.

Beatification

On April 24, 2001, the Vatican recognized Sr. Rosalie’s heroic practice of virtue. The “Apostle of the Mouffetard Quarter” of Paris was given the title of Venerable. A theologian summed her up as “an outstanding woman; she was sensitive, dynamic, strong, warmhearted, tender, discreet, of good character and had a good sense of humor.”

Sr. Rosalie Rendu was beatified in Rome on November 9, 2003 by Pope John Paul II. All Vincentians celebrate this beautiful model of love for the poor and co-founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Blessed Rosalie Rendu’s Feast Day is celebrated on February 7th.

4.5 VINCENTIAN SAINTS, BLESSEDS AND VENERABLES

Vincentian spirituality works. It accomplishes its purpose: personal holiness. Vincentian spirituality depends, first and foremost, on God’s grace and, second, on cooperation with that grace. It is a practical, hands-on, person-to-person spirituality patterned after the Society’s founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and its patron, St. Vincent de Paul. Vincentian spirituality exemplifies the Good Samaritan. Since the foundation of the Society in 1833, thousands upon thousands of men and women throughout the world have become holy through the practice of Vincentian spirituality. Some of these persons have been recognized by the Church and raised to the altar. More will be so honored in the future. The Vincentian Family of St. Vincent de Paul includes a large number of *saints*, *blesseds*, and *venerables*, but our focus here is on those men and women who were active members in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Saint Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962)

Feast: April 28th

Gianna Beretta was born in Magenta (Milan), Italy, on October 4, 1922, the tenth of thirteen children. She was raised in a devout family, with parents who demonstrated deep faith and a generous spirit of charity. Third Order Franciscans, her father and mother consecrated their family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Gianna inherited her parents' attraction to prayer and compassion for the poor.

Gianna began primary school in 1928 and secondary school in 1933. She had little interest in academics, preferring art, music, and painting. With a love for the outdoors and a lively family life, she was a happy, smiling girl, though quiet. Gianna visited the Blessed Sacrament daily and always carried a rosary with her.



In 1937, the Beretta family moved so that the older children could attend the University of Genoa. Gianna became an active member of Catholic Action in her parish. In 1942, both parents died. That same year, Gianna was admitted to the School of Medicine at the University of Milan. In her fourth year, she transferred to the University of Pavia, where she obtained her degree in medicine and surgery in March 1950.

During medical school, Gianna became an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Thinking that she might have a vocation to the religious life, she made a pilgrimage to Lourdes, seeking discernment. Upon her return, she met and fell in love with Pietro Molla. Taking this as an answer to her prayers, she married Pietro on September 24, 1955; her brother Giuseppe, a priest, witnessed the marriage.

Gianna successfully blended her profession, ministry, and family life. With her brother Ferdinando, also a physician, she opened a clinic in a small town of two thousand people several miles from the family home. She was especially generous to the poor, providing medicine and money for those in need.

Gianna and Pietro had three children. Each pregnancy was a risk because of her fragile health. Their son, Pierluigi, was born in 1956, Maria Zita in 1957, and Laura Enrica Maria in 1959. After a number of miscarriages, Gianna again became pregnant. Toward the end of the second month of this pregnancy, she began to experience pain. Her doctor diagnosed a fibrous tumor in the ovary. Gianna knew the risk she was running, but kept the suffering to herself.

On the way to the hospital on April 20, 1962, Gianna told her husband, Pietro: "If they should ask which of the two lives they should save, do not hesitate – first, the life of the child." On April 21st, Gianna Emanuela was delivered by Caesarean section. Septic peritonitis set in and Gianna suffered greatly, but she refused powerful drugs and insisted on dying at home. On April 29th, she passed away.

For three days, an endless procession of admirers passed her coffin. People spoke of her sacrifices and great compassion. The Archbishop of Milan opened the cause for her beatification in 1972 and Pope John Paul II beatified her on April 24, 1994 in the presence of her husband and four children. At the ceremony, her son, Pierluigi, said:

“My mother knew how to live her earthly, daily existence with simplicity, balance, and constant service, all in a beautiful harmony, first as a young student and professional person, as a woman, then as wife and mother. Her generous commitment to and involvement in Catholic Action and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, along with her *joie de vivre*, was crowned with her love of piano, painting, tennis, mountain climbing, skiing, the symphony, theatre, and traveling.”

St. Gianna was canonized by Pope John Paul II on May 16, 2004. Called a “mother-martyr for the love of God and in obedience to his commandment,” Gianna has much to teach Vincentians.

St. Richard Pampuri (1897-1930) Feast: May 1st

Richard Pampuri stands as a symbol of generosity of heart. He was born Erminio Filippo Pampuri in Trivolizi, Italy on August 2, 1897, the tenth child of a well-to-do and pious family. His mother died when he was three, and Richard was sent to Torino to live with his grandfather and an aunt. His uncle, Carlo, a lover of the medical profession, instilled in him a deep love of serving the sick.



In 1907, Richard's father was killed in an accident. Richard survived the tragedy through the love and kindness of his family. Having seriously considered the foreign missions, he decided on medical school instead. His sister entered the convent, and he became a Franciscan tertiary.

Richard took part in Catholic associations when anticlericalism was rampant in Italy. Drafted into the military, he served in the medical corps in World War I and was decorated for bravery. In 1918, Richard returned to his studies, graduating in medicine and surgery on July 6, 1921. He completed his internship the next year and in 1923 registered at Pavia University as a general practitioner and surgeon.

As a student, Richard became very active in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and other service organizations. He wrote to his sister, the religious: “Pray that pride, selfishness, and any other evil passion will not prevent me from always seeing the suffering of Christ in my patients, treating him and comforting him.” This is certainly the core of Vincentian spirituality!

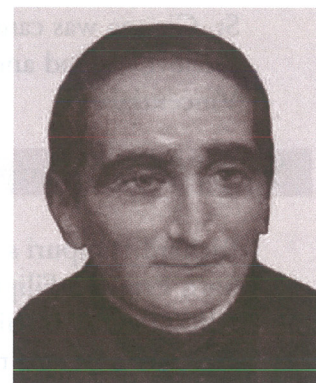
Richard moved to Milan and founded the “Band of Pius X,” a group dedicated to medical care for the poor. He also raised funds to provide food and clothing for the needy. Discerning a vocation to the religious life, he joined the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God. On October 28, 1928, Richard took vows in the community and was assigned to a clinic in Brescia, where

he continued to serve the poor. The severe lung disease he suffered from worsened. Moved to his community's hospital in Milan, he developed pneumonia and prophesied when he would die: on May 1, 1930 at the age of 33.

Many healings took place at his tomb and his cause for canonization proceeded quickly. Richard was beatified in 1981, and Pope John Paul II canonized him on November 1, 1989, observing of Richard that he was "close to our times, but even closer to our problems and our sensibilities." In Richard, Vincentians have another saint to act as intercessor, another young person of great example in witnessing love for the poor.

Blessed Francis Faa di Bruno (1825 – 1888) Feast: March 27th

Francis was born in Alessandria, Italy on March 29, 1825, the youngest of twelve children. At the age of sixteen, he enlisted in the military of Piedmont and reached the rank of captain. Assigned to Paris in 1849, Francis earned a doctorate in mathematics and astronomy at the Sorbonne. There he joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and became an active member. Since Blessed Frederic Ozanam taught at the Sorbonne through April 1852, Francis may actually have known him.



Resigning his military commission to pursue his academic interests, Francis became one of the leading mathematicians and astronomers of his time. He moved to Italy to assume a professorship at the University of Turin. Francis wrote more than forty articles for American and European publications. His writings are included in the Catalogue of Scientific Papers of the Royal Society in London. Francis also wrote ascetical studies and sacred melodies and invented scientific apparatuses.

In Turin, Francis, a dedicated lay person, focused on charitable works and showed special concern for the well-being and safety of women and young girls, establishing schools, retirement homes, and other charitable institutions. In 1868, he founded the Sisters of Our Lady of Suffrage and the Society of Saint Zita to help in his ministry. The Society of Saint Zita especially addressed the needs of domestic workers. Francis studied for the priesthood in Turin and was ordained in 1876 at the age of fifty-one. He died in Turin on March 27, 1888.

Pope John Paul II beatified Francis on September 25, 1988, calling him "a prophet in the midst of the people of God" and "a giant of faith and charity," and praising him for knowing how "to find positive responses to the needs of his time." Blessed Francis gives Vincentians much to think about in their ministry.

Blessed Contardo Ferrini (1859-1902) Feast: October 27th

There are many similarities between Contardo Ferrini and Frederic Ozanam. Both were born in Milan, both were university professors in ungodly situations, both were active members of the Society, both produced remarkable writings, and both died young.



Contardo was born on April 4, 1859 and baptized at the same font as Blessed Frederic. Contardo always maintained that his First Communion at the age of twelve was the real conversion of his life. A daily communicant, he saw the Eucharist as the secret of holiness and the means of transformation into Christ. He made frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament and had a deep love for the Mother of Jesus.

During his teens, two priest friends encouraged the love of science and learning that Contardo had inherited from his father. After a short time at Milan University, he spent two years at Pavia University, earning a doctorate in law at Pavia's Borromeo College. Following further study in Berlin, he became a professor of Roman law, emerging as a leading expert in his field and authoring over 200 articles on the subject. During his student days, Contardo became an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Like Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Contardo considered the priesthood but decided against it. Unlike Frederic, he never married, at 22 taking a private vow of celibacy. By the age of 26, he had served in four universities, ending with a professorship in his hometown of Milan. He then entered local government for three years.

Contardo was not afraid to show his faith. Swimming and mountain climbing were his hobbies. "God speaks to man in the clouds on the mountaintops," he once observed, "in the roaring of the torrents ... in the dazzling splendor of the unmelting snow." Pope Pius XI said of Contardo: "My relations with him were purely scientific and dealt with the beauty of high mountains. This was for him an inspiration to holiness and almost a natural revelation of God."

A faithful member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul like his father before him, Contardo put his faith into action among the poor. Blessed from childhood with a deep sense of God, Contardo saw His presence in the poor and needy. Prayer was especially important to him, as he confirms here:

"To preach by example is good, and to preach by the word is good. But what is more effective than to preach by prayer? If any of our great men have known and felt God, ask yourself whether this came to them in the hard study of difficult problems, or not rather in the morning before the altar, or when they watched the last rays of the sun tinting the hills, or as the moon in its rising let its light fall on a statue of the Virgin Mother and a man knelt in sweet and pure prayer."

Never healthy, Contardo would succumb to typhus at the age of 43. "One is so well when one is near to God," he said as he lay dying, then asking, "Have I done my duty?" After his death on October 17, 1902, devotion to Contardo steadily grew. His cause was introduced in 1910 by order of St. Pope Pius X. In April 1947, Contardo was beatified in the presence of students, professors, and members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. May Blessed Contardo Ferrini intercede for all Vincentians and teach us by his example to pray!

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925) Feast: July 4th

Pier Giorgio was born in Turin, Italy on April 6, 1901. His father, Alfredo, founded the famous Piedmont newspaper, *La Stampa*, and played a role in Italian politics, serving in the senate and as ambassador to Berlin in 1920. His many commitments prevented him from taking an active part in his children's upbringing. This fell to their mother, Adela, who made quite a name for herself as an artist.



Adela taught Pier Giorgio and his sister Luciana (born one year after her brother) verses from the Gospels. Pier Giorgio was deeply moved by them. Although his father was not a believer and his mother was not overly religious, Pier Giorgio developed an exceptional relationship with God. It was clearly a case of God's grace at work in response to Pier Giorgio's faith. From the time he was twelve until his death at 24, Pier Giorgio received Holy Communion daily.

At 17, he joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and committed himself to serving the poor, proclaiming: "Jesus visits me every morning in Holy Communion. I repay him with my poor means, visiting the poor." When asked how he could stand the bad odors and unclean conditions of their homes, he answered: "Don't forget that even if the house you visit is very dirty, there you may find Jesus." Here again is an example of the core of Vincentian spirituality. Pier Giorgio did not love the poor in general; he loved the poor individual.

He was not afraid to voice his opinion about the Society. "I would suppress some Conferences of the Society," he once observed. "Sometimes there are people who are rich in Christian zeal but who give up in the face of difficulties, then it's better for them not to be in the Society. I don't think those people act in bad faith, but it's better for these groups not to exist." Pier Giorgio never hesitated to help anyone, regardless of the cost to himself, and he thought every Vincentian should do the same.

In home visits, he displayed great virtue, believing that he was "poor as any poor man." People sensed this in his demeanor and conversation. With respect, tact, and patience in listening to them, and care and simplicity in addressing their needs, he communicated his sense of equality with the poor.

In 1919, he joined the Catholic Student Federation and the Popular Party, a political organization which promoted the Catholic Church's teachings. He even entertained the idea of merging the Catholic Student Federation with the Catholic Workers' Organization. "Charity is not enough: we need social reform," he used to say, as he worked for both. He also gave his time to help establish a Catholic daily newspaper, *Momento*, which was based on the principles of Pope St. Leo XIII's encyclical on social and economic matters, *Rerum Novarum*. He wrote:

"In this trying time that our country is going through we Catholics and especially we students have a serious duty to fulfill: our self-formation. We, who by the grace of God are Catholics ... must steel ourselves for the battle we shall certainly have to fight to fulfill our program and give our country, in the not too distant future, happier days and a morally healthy society, but to achieve this we need constant prayer to obtain from God that grace without which all our prayers are useless; organization and discipline to be ready for action at the right time; and finally, the sacrifice of our passion and of ourselves, because without that we cannot achieve our aim."

Pier Giorgio also felt a strong, mysterious urge to be near the Blessed Sacrament. During nocturnal adoration, he would spend all night on his knees in profound prayer. He influenced other students to make the annual university retreat given by the Jesuits. He loved the rosary, a family practice, and prayed it three times daily after becoming a Dominican tertiary.

Pier Giorgio valued friendships. Frequently he asked friends for their prayers and he humbly accepted help, advice, and encouragement from them. He was especially close to his sister, Luciana. While Pier Giorgio focused on the poor, she concentrated on her father's world of diplomacy. The difference drew them closer as young adults. Only Luciana truly understood her brother's heart. Other family members might disapprove of his activities, but not Luciana. He often sought her advice. She knew her brother's best friends: young women and men who stood by each other and were full of fun and faith. Two of the young men became priests. With one of the girls, Laura, Pier Giorgio fell in love.

The last months of his life were filled with suffering. His parents' relationship was strained. Pier Giorgio and Luciana struggled to keep them together. Fearing that his growing love for Laura, who was not of the same social standing as the Frassatis, might exacerbate conflict in the family, he decided to give her up.

Pier Giorgio contracted poliomyelitis and became paralyzed. His family, preoccupied with caring for a dying grandmother, at first did not recognize the seriousness of his illness. Pier Giorgio asked for nothing and did not complain. On Friday, the day he usually visited the poor, he did not forget, but with his paralytic hand wrote them a message.

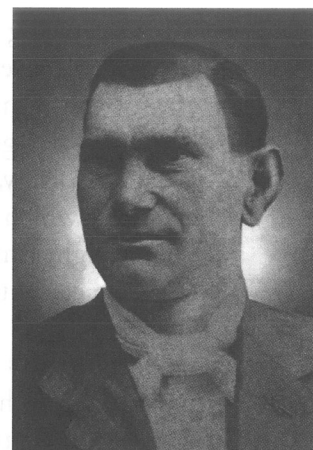
Pier Giorgio died peacefully on July 4, 1925 at the age of 24. When his death became known in Turin, hundreds came to view his body, out of love for this good and generous young man who'd offered everyone a kind word and a smile. Most of the mourners knew neither his name nor his social position. The Frassati family was stunned by their number and status. Luciana published several books containing the memories and words of her brother, and her reflections on him.

Pope John Paul II beatified Pier Giorgio on May 20, 1990. He is an outstanding example for all Vincentians, but especially for young people who are looking for a role model. They will find someone to identify with in this vibrant young outdoorsman who combined a deep love for Christ, a desire to serve the needy, and a mission to imbue society and politics with Christian ideals.

Blessed Ceferino Gimenez Malla (1861-1936) Feast: August 2nd

For centuries Gypsies have kept their own customs and traditions. Their Catholic faith is little known or understood, but now one of their own has been raised to the altar of the Church: Blessed Ceferino Gimenez Malla, called “El Pele” and widely respected by the Spanish.

Ceferino was born in Fraga, Huesca, Spain, probably on August 26, 1861. He married a Gypsy woman from Lerida, Teresa Gimenez Castro, in a Gypsy-style ceremony and settled in Barbastro, Aragon. In 1912, Ceferino and Teresa had their marriage convalidated in the Church, and Ceferino’s life changed dramatically; he had a deep conversion experience. Having no children, they adopted a niece, Pepita, and raised her as a devout Catholic.



Though illiterate, Ceferino was a respected horse dealer. The poor, the uneducated, and even the politically powerful came to him for advice and counsel. A daily communicant, he was revered for his Catholic piety, and for his honesty in business and charity to the poor. He became an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and was ever ready to give generously to those poorer than he.

Ceferino used his gift as a great storyteller to teach children prayers and hymns, as well as stories from the Bible. He took part in “Eucharistic Thursdays,” and night adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

In July 1936, during the Spanish Civil War, Ceferino was imprisoned for protesting the arrest of a priest by Spanish revolutionary militia. While in prison, he recited the rosary, which angered his guards. Offered his freedom if he would give up his beads, he refused. Ceferino considered devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary a matter of great honor and would not deny the Mother of God.

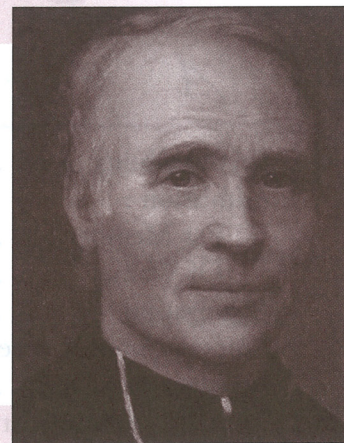
On August 2, 1936, three weeks before his 75th birthday, Ceferino was executed by firing squad, clutching his rosary and shouting, “Long live Christ the King!” Pope John Paul II beatified him on Sunday, May 4, 1997, observing that a “death for the faith” is always rooted deeply in a “life of faith.” Exemplifying charity for the poor and devotion to Mary, Blessed Ceferino is a wonderful example for all Vincentians.

Venerable Alberto Capellan Zuazo (1888-1965)

On March 6, 1998, Pope John Paul II issued a decree proclaiming the heroicity of the virtues of the layman Alberto Capellan. Alberto was born August 7, 1888, at Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Spain. After his death on February 24, 1965, his remains were taken to the city of his birth. Alberto was a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and president of his Conference. He manifested a gentle charity, especially to the homeless for whom he obtained shelter.

Venerable Jean-Leon Le Prevost (1803-1874)

On December 21, 1998, Pope John Paul II promulgated the decree regarding the heroic virtue of the Servant of God, Jean-Leon Le Prevost. Jean-Leon was an original member of the first Conference of the Society and a close friend of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. Frederic mentions Jean-Leon many times in his letters. Jean-Leon became a priest and founder of the Institute of Religious of St. Vincent de Paul, a small community of priests and brothers ministering to the needy in France, Canada, Brazil, and elsewhere.



Vincentian Martyrs of Spain

Listed on the wall of the Church of St. Robert Bellarmine in Madrid, the Spanish National Sanctuary of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, are the names of 586 Vincentians martyred during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

Vincentian Family Saints, Blesseds, and Martyrs

Further information is available on the Vincentian Family website: www.FamVin.org.

