
François Lallier (1814-1886)

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Some brief biographical data:

François Lallier was born in Joigny (Yonne), Burgundy region, on 24 January 1814. He died in Sens on 23 December 1886, aged 72. His parents were Antoine-François Lallier, a doctor in Joigny, and Adélaïde Picard, who died very young, only 28 years old, when François was 8. He also had two younger sisters, Virginie and Adélaïde.

He was a founder member of the Archaeology Society in the City of Sens, becoming its chairman. On 22 April 1839, he married Henriette Delporte in Sens (Yonne). She suffered several miscarriages, and had three children born alive. Henry, born in 1840 died aged 23, Lucie, who died on 18 August 1844 aged only sixteen months, and Paul, born in 1855 and died aged 31.

He was, according to Amélie Ozanam, her husband's favourite among his friends. Lallier admired Ozanam very deeply. In 1845, Ozanam asked him to be Marie's godfather.

He only left his home town of Sens to follow his legal studies, from 1830 to 1836, before returning. He knew Ozanam while he was in the faculty of Law, where both of them studied from 1831 to 1832.

Lallier belonged to the Conference of History, which met in the rue de l'Estrapade, under the auspices of Emmanuel Bailly. It is likely that it was Ozanam who introduced him there. Ozanam, Lamache and he formed a kind of committee which prepared the contributions these young Catholics made, in order to respond to the attacks of the rationalists and the followers of Saint-Simon against Christ and his Church.

Lallier was part of the small delegation which approached Bailly to explain to him the concerns these young men had about caring for the poor. On 23 April 1833, he attended the first meeting held at the offices of the Tribune Catholique. Lallier proposed that an eighth member should be admitted. This was received coldly. They feared upsetting the spirit of friendship and intimacy among the small group. Only Ozanam supported his friend, and thus the other members gave in. The new member, Gustave de la Noue, was an excellent addition.

In 1835, Bailly gave Lallier the job of editing the articles of the Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The president took on the task of composing the preface which enshrines the essence and spirit of the work. Lallier did his job assiduously, with the precise writing style and sober expression which were the characteristics of this excellent lawyer. From then on, the Rule was used for aggregations, so necessary for the Society's development. In 1837, he was appointed Secretary General of the Society, and as such signed some of the circular letters which form a priceless record of Vincentian tradition. It was his last contribution to the work of Council General. He resigned in 1839 and returned to Sens, where he would stay for the rest of his life. First of all, he held the office of deputy judge.

Lamache and De la Perrière gave the following tribute to him: *"Lallier was Ozanam's assistant. A powerful intelligence, profound goodness, great common sense, more reason than imagination, solid rather than brilliant; reserved, almost cold, but a warm heart, and in his close relationships, overflowing with tenderness; stern as a magistrate, with a simple and affectionate approach which gave him the name among us of Uncle Lallier"*.

In January 1844, Lallier held the first meeting of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Sens, in a modest house near the Porte Notre Dame. "It had just two members", he said, "The meetings, every three weeks, were filled with prayers, spiritual readings and requests for alms, while they wondered where to find a third brother member to form one of those meetings which Our Lord promised to bless, and in which they could put into practice the rule: Tres faciunt capitulum. (Three people are required to form a Conference), they achieved this very quickly.

Pope Pius IX honoured him with the title of Knight of St Gregory the Great.

He was also awarded the Croix de la Légion d'Honneur in 1873 for his years of service in civil society.

We do not know much about the death of Lallier, which took place on 23 December 1886. A solid worker, firm in his convictions and faithful in his friendships, in every respect he was a model of a Christian judge. And above all, he was an exemplary member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Ozanam loved to rely on him: his correspondence is evidence of that.