

Ozanam, Social Mobilizer Par Excellence

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When we analyze the work of the Vincentian Conferences, we note that a good part of them carries out an excellent work of charity and social insertion, in addition to a competent evangelizing practice that helps needy families, that administers the sacraments, that reconciles couples, that which brings children and teenagers back to a path of healthy growth.

But we also know Conferences that only deliver the basic baskets, that pray little (with the assisted people and among its members) and that fail to develop the Vincentian spirituality in the region where they act, burying their talents of committed laity and promoters of the Social doctrine of the church, whose preaching the blessed Antoine Frederic Ozanam did with enough property and efficiency.

For all of us, Ozanam was and is the great model of lay committed and vocationated. While remaining secular, he sought an upright, dignified life, focused on the values of the Church and the family, acting as a Christian committed to social justice and mobilization, elements that seek equality between people. He and his fellow founders decided to be Catholics different from others, including the social side of their practice and encouraging thousands of people to

follow in their footsteps. That is, Ozanam and the other founders created a new Catholic lay culture, which brought great benefits to humanity.

We have to recognize this: Ozanam has managed to mobilize a large crowd of people to help the poor, through his preaching, his example and his action. Ozanam, just for his coherence of life already convinced people, who became volunteers in the struggle for a better world. This mobilization was born precisely within the Conferences, assisting the poor under the guidance of Sr. Rosalie Rendu, in the poor and unhygienic neighborhoods of Paris in 1833. In a short time, new Conferences began to do the same, which demonstrates the capacity of irradiation of this movement.

Today, all Vincentian Conferences in the world are “a true miracle” thanks to the vision and action of Ozanam and his companions who, from a small seed, gave rise to innumerable trees, which continue to bear many fruits around the world in favor of the poor. These people accepted the invitation of the founders and today they are part of a group whose style of spirituality consists in loving God in the person of the poor, without judgments or prejudices.

We cannot deviate from the path of sanctification and the practice of a mature spirituality to achieve the goals we want. We will only achieve them if we look at ourselves, in addition to Ozanam, in other wonderful examples of holy and committed life, such as those of Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac and many other saints of the Vincentian Family. They adopted a committed, Christian, solidary, reforming and innovative “way of life.” They were the face, the voice, the attitude and the hands of Christ, living with effusive vigor the Charity, as mission of every Catholic. In order for our Conferences to be more efficient, more evangelizing and more holy, it is enough for us to live like these models.

The Vincentian cannot accommodate himself, and must continue to mobilize those around him, denouncing injustices, crying out for better living conditions and helping with his ideas of transformation and systemic change.

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