

Ozanam and Youth

April 30, 2020

In his homily at the Beatification of Frederic Ozanam, John Paul II said of him, “ Frederic experienced a call to love and thereby gave the great example of a great love of God and man.” The Pope offered him as a great example to all young people, especially those who were gathering for World Youth Day. An extract from one of his letters gives insight into his philosophy of service. “There is one thing that has not been roughly them, one thing that they know only by name. They must have seen others suffering to learn to suffer through it when suffering comes to them, sooner or later. This is sorrow, privation, and need. These young gentlemen should learn what hunger is, what thirst is, the empty storeroom. They must see pitiful people, sick and crying children. They have to see them, and they have to love them.”

For Ozanam, you learned not primarily through theory but rather through direct hands on experience. This would be his consistent message to the youth of his time. Do it! Don't just talk about it!

The motto of the Society was simple. Love, Share, Serve. It was a motto that the early Vincentians lived out in their work with the poor of Paris. They could have walked past the poor of Paris without seeing them. But they were guided by the direction of a holy Daughter of Charity, Sr. Rosalie Rondu. With her direction, based on Mathew 25, these young people turned their direction towards seeing, loving and serving the poor in their midst. Whatever were the obstacles, they found their ways around them. A great fervor and the resilience of youth served them well. For Frederic, he had a great sense of optimism. Some of his optimism came from seeing those who had been away from the church, returning and being so involved in the life and service of the church.

Questions

1. If I am young, what hope, and inspiration am I taking from reflecting on Ozanam's life? What specific calls to charity and action do I sense within myself? If I am older, what hopes do I have for the youth of today? How can Frederic's example help me to reach out and support those who are coming after me?
2. Do I perceive luke-warmness in myself concerning the sharing of my faith? Has hesitation to profess my faith held me back? If so, what can I do in the future to grow in strength?

Tomorrow's writing will be Ozanam and Gobelin Weaver.s

Fr. Marty