

Ozanam and Social Questions

April 28

In a letter to a friend, Ozanam wrote: "The question that divides the men of our time is no longer a matter of political forms, but rather a social question. The issue is to know who will triumph: the spirit of egoism or the spirit of sacrifice; or whether Society will be either a large scale exploitation for the good of the strongest, or a consecration of each person for the good of all, and especially for the protection of the weakest."

At this time in the history of France, there was a terrible disparity in the sharing of wealth. This disparity exists today in our own world. Vincentian's, like Ozanam, saw this in his day and sought to treat more than just the present problem of poverty but also to look deeper into correcting the system which leads to the existence of poverty in the world. Ozanam saw the necessity of uniting together both charity and justice, he wrote again, "the social order rests on two virtues: justice and charity. But justice already supposes great love, since we have to love a person greatly to respect his rights which border on our rights, and his liberty that troubles our liberty. Yet, while justice has limits, charity has none."

Ozanam desired in his life to be a mediator. He wanted to reconcile many divergent ideas like religion and science, the one with a lot and the one with nothing. To the end of his short life he sought to raise up the poor and call others to their realization of their responsibility to a charitable mission.

Questions

1. Do I know any truly poor or lonely people? Do I do anything I can do to reach out to them? What keeps me from doing so?
2. What has been my experience of loneliness or poverty? Have I overcome this? Who were those who supported me at this time? What can I learn from their care for me?

****We have an offer from Beth Turner. She has been making masks. If anyone is in need of a mask, please email Elaine Ebaugh and let her know how many you need. I will get in touch with Beth to get the masks into your hands and onto your faces.

Fr. Marty