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Antoine Frederic Ozanam: Building the Good Society

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1 **Antoine Frederic Ozanam: Building the Good Society**

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I. INTRODUCTION

96 Antoine Frederic Ozanam embodies the best of the Catholic intellectual tradition,
97 with doctorates in law and literature by the age of 26. He translated intellectual insights
98 into practice, as he endeavored to help build the good society. As a twenty year old law
99 student in Paris in 1833, he founded the St. Vincent de Paul¹ Society; it soon became the
100 largest Catholic charity in the world, with a million members serving the poor in scores
101 of counties.² . He founded it not by drafting sophisticated corporate charters and
102 negotiating favorable tax arrangements, but, rather, by direct personal witness. He and a
103 few fellow law students began carrying free wood and coal for fuel to the poor in the
104 Paris tenement slums in 1833! His life was a dramatic fusion of intellectual
105 accomplishment with direct, personal action to alleviate the poverty of the least amongst
106 us. Thus, his life and his legacy have special resonance for law students today. He did not
107 defer social action until he was professionally established. Rather, he saw the cold misery
108 of the poor in Paris as a twenty year old law student, and he carried fuel to them in their
109 tenements. His personal example reminds us to seize the moments available to us.

110 What follows is a study of Ozanam’s important academic and professional
111 writing, in his legal lectures, essays, and personal letters, that formed much of the
112 groundwork for Catholic social justice teaching about workers’ rights, including the right
113 to a natural wage essential to human dignity and the right to join labor unions.

114 Drawing on Catholic natural law and jurisprudence, he pioneered the concept of
115 the natural wage. He also called for voluntary labor unions. Ozanam’s work on the

¹ St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660) was the French founder, in 1625, of the Congregation of the Mission, Catholic priests making special outreach ministry to the poor.

² See, www.Vincent.org/svdp.htm; data@vincent.org. www.fanvub,irg/cm/curia/vincentians. www.svp.ie.

116 natural wage became the conceptual platform for the minimum wage law, the Fair Labor
117 Standards Act, enacted by the Roosevelt administration during the New Deal.³ More
118 contemporaneously, Ozanam's natural wage principle has its legacy in the living wage
119 initiatives successfully implemented into law in many municipalities throughout the
120 United States.⁴

121 Condemning slavery well before the Civil War, Ozanam's concepts of free,
122 dignified labor, of the natural wage, and of voluntary unions helped set the stage for the
123 great Catholic social encyclicals⁵ on the rights of workers, beginning with Pope Leo
124 XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (On Labor) in 1891.⁶

125 Ozanam's personal practices of bringing direct relief to the poor, in addition to the
126 work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, has threads as different, and as related, as the
127 philosophy and practice of personalism at the heart of the Catholic Worker movement⁷,
128 and in the interesting worker priest phenomenon in France fifty years ago.⁸

³ 29 USC 201-219.

⁴ For a catalog and comprehensive, insightful assessment of the living wage movement, see, William Quigley, *Ending Poverty as We Know It* (2003).

⁵ Encyclicals, authoritative but not dogmatic letters of unity from the Popes and designed to elucidate and clarify, began to be written during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XIV in 1740. Garry Wills, *Politics and Catholic Freedom* (1964) at 96-97.

⁶ In addition to *Rerum Novarum* (1891), other great social encyclicals on workers' rights include Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (1981), Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), and Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991). There is comprehensive literature on the Catholic social encyclicals. See, Kevin J. Doyle, *The Shifting Legal Landscape of Contingent Employment: A Proposal to Reform Work*, 33 *Seton Hall L. Rev.* 641 (2003); David L. Gregory, *Catholic Labor Theory and the Transformation of Work*, 45 *Wash. & Lee L. Rev.* 119 (1988); David L. Gregory, *Catholic Social Teaching on Work*, 49 *Labor Law J.* 912 (1998); David L. Gregory, *Reflections on Current Applications of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1 *Villanova J. Catholic Social Thought* 647 (2004); Lucia A. Silecchia, *Environmental Ethics from the Perspective of NEPA and Catholic Social Teaching: Ecological Guidance for the 21st Century*, 28 *Wm. & Mary Envtl. L. & Pol'y Rev.* 659 (2004); Lucia A. Silecchia, *Reflections on the Future of Social Justice*, 23 *Seattle L. Rev.* 1121 (2000).

⁷ For discussion of the practice and philosophy of personalism in the Catholic Worker movement, see, David L. Gregory, *Dorothy Day's Lessons for the Transformation of Work*, 14 *Hofstra Labor L.J.* 57 (1996).

⁸ See Part III D.

129 Declared “Blessed” and beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1997, this married
130 Catholic lawyer and commercial law and literature professor, who died at age 40 in 1853,
131 is on the path to canonization as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. His contributions
132 to social justice, and to applied workers’ rights to decent compensation and working
133 conditions, are worth timely and continuing study and reflection.

134 **II. Antoine Frederick Ozanam: A Life**

135 A. Family Life and Early Years

136 Ozanam came from an established Catholic family in Lyon, France with many
137 generations of doctors and lawyers. The family lineage is traceable to 43 B.C., the year of
138 the death of Jeremiah Hozannam.⁹ In the seventh century, the Jewish Samuel Hozannam
139 family was baptized into the Catholic Church by the local bishop, whom they sheltered
140 from hostile royalty; the family name remained Hozannam until Frederic’s grandfather
141 began using the Ozanam form.¹⁰

142 Despite the anti-Catholicism in the revolutionary French Republic,¹¹ his father,
143 Jean-Antoine Ozanam, joined the army in 1793, and served with distinction until 1798;
144 wounded five times, he left the army as a captain.¹² His father married Marie Nantas on
145 April 22, 1800 in Lyon, France; he was 27, she was 19.¹³ They were devout Catholics.
146 After prospering in the silk business in Lyons, he went bankrupt and moved to Milan,
147 Italy. Walking 19 miles every day to medical school in Pavia from Milan, he completed
148 his medical training in two years and became a doctor at the age of 38.¹⁴

⁹ Albert Paul Schimberg, *The Great Friend: Frederick Ozanam* 21 (1946)..

¹⁰ *Id.* at 21.

¹¹ Jean, Ozanam’s father, was particularly repulsed by Napoleon taking Pope Pius VII into captivity. Albert Paul Schimberg, *The Great Friend: Frederick Ozanam* 5, n. 5 (1946)

¹² Albert Paul Schimberg, *The Great Friend: Frederick Ozanam* 3 (1946).

¹³ *Id.* at 4.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 5-6.

149 Born in Milan at midnight on April 23, 1813, Frederic was his parents' fifth
150 child.¹⁵ Of fourteen children, four lived to maturity; Alphonse, his older brother, became
151 a priest; younger brother Charles became a doctor; sister Elisa died at 19, when Frederic
152 was seven.¹⁶ When he was three, his family moved in October, 1816 to Lyon, France
153 from Milan.¹⁷ In Lyon, his father became the doctor at the municipal hospital.¹⁸

154 Ozanam was a brilliant student at the Royal College of Lyon. Abbe Noirot, with
155 whom he maintained a life long friendship, was his teacher, mentor, and spiritual
156 director. At sixteen, he had the typical teenager's crisis of doubting his faith, through
157 which he persevered with Noirot's help and guidance.¹⁹ Ozanam published some poetry
158 and political essays in *The Bee*, a review journal of the Royal College of Lyons while a
159 student there.²⁰

160 He graduated at the top of his class in July, 1829, and, for two years, worked in
161 Lyons as a clerk to an attorney.²¹

162 B. Paris, and Professional Education

163 In 1831, Ozanam arrived in Paris from his home in Lyon, ready to begin his
164 studies at the University of Paris Ecole du Droit (School of Law).²² At first blush, there
165 was nothing remarkable about him. He was not handsome or elegant.²³ Rather, he was

¹⁵ Id. at 7.

¹⁶ Id. at 10.

¹⁷ Id. at 7.

¹⁸ Id. at 8.

¹⁹ Auge. at 9. Schimberg at 22-29.

²⁰ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World 2* (1966); Schimberg at 29.

²¹ Emmanuel Renner, *The Historical Thought of Frederic Ozanam* at 3 (1959).

²² Renner at 6.

²³ Apparently, adulthood reflected that little changed. Philosophy Professor Elme-Marie Caro at the French Academy described the adult Professor Ozanam at the Sorbonne in the mid-1840s: "Ozanam was neither handsome, elegant, nor graceful. His appearance was commonplace, his manner awkward and embarrassed. Extreme near-sightedness and a tangled mass of hair completed a rather strange ensemble." Schimberg at 155-156.

166 scholarly, introspective, and abstract, of average height, with long, unkempt hair.²⁴ He
167 was pale, nearsighted, and thin.²⁵ He was a shy, homesick provincial, repulsed by the
168 anti-Christian secularism of Paris.²⁶

169 Tumultuous Paris was filled with poverty²⁷ and intrigue,²⁸ recently rocked by the
170 July, 1830 Revolution which sent into exile the Bourbon King Charles X, brother of King
171 Louis XVI who had been executed in 1793. The 1830 Revolution ushered in the “July
172 Monarchy” of Bourbon King Louis-Philippe who reigned until he fled for exile in
173 London in the Revolution of February, 1848.²⁹

174 France never fully recovered from the French Revolution, especially from its
175 madness and bloodlust. The revolutionaries almost literally ate their young, sending one
176 another to the guillotine, including Robespierre and St. Just, and installing a prostitute on
177 the altar of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in pagan repudiation of the Catholic Church.
178 Catholics, associated, fairly or unfairly, with the reactionary and repressive ancien
179 regime, were special targets for extermination by the Revolution, with many put to mass
180 murder.³⁰ Deep strains of anti-Catholicism remained overt throughout the social, cultural,
181 and intellectual life of Paris in the 1830s, much of it infuriated reaction to the deposed
182 Catholic Bourbon King Charles X. Until he was deposed in July, 1830, he acted as

²⁴ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 1 (1966).

²⁵ Schimberg at 38.

²⁶ Auge at 2, 8. He wrote to a cousin, Ernest Falconnet, a month after arriving in Paris: “Paris displeases me because there is no life, no faith, no love; it is like a corpse to which I, young and alive, attached...” Id. at 8.

²⁷ With a population of 27,500,000, estimates of those in poverty ranged from 4 to 10 million. Schimberg at 204.

²⁸ Honore de Balzac (1799-1850) captured the ambiance and ethos of Paris in the 1830s in his more than ninety novels, principally *The Human Comedy*. . So, too, of course, did Victor Hugo (1802-1885), author of *Les Miserables*. (1862).

²⁹ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 6, 8 (1966).

³⁰ Some of the frenzy has been powerfully captured in art and culture, such as the opera, *The Dialogue of the Carmelites* (exploring the journeys of faith of Catholic Carmelite nuns sent to the guillotine for the crime of being, well, Catholic).

183 though the French Revolution of 1789 had never occurred. He subscribed to the
184 theocratic principle of “the union of altar and throne,” and he made sacrilege a crime,
185 imposed heavy censorship, and placed education with the Church.³¹ Anticlericalism was
186 a predictable part of the 1830 insurrection; seminaries were attacked, and a mob
187 demolished the palatial residence of the Archbishop of Paris in 1831.³² French Catholic
188 conservative royalists hated the Revolution, and denounced it as demonic, immoral, and
189 evil.³³

190 Pervasive modernist change resumed its revolutionary pace, as France continued
191 the cultural transition to a secular and pluralist order, and a concurrent economic and
192 social transition from a rural to an industrial and urban society.³⁴

193 Academic and intellectual life was especially anti-Catholic. Ozanam regarded
194 Voltaire as the root of French anti-Catholicism; “all irreligion in France...still follows
195 Voltaire.”³⁵ The Saint-Simonian³⁶ Utopian Socialists and the positivist philosophy of
196 Auguste Comte posed as alternative humanistic religions superior to orthodox
197 Catholicism.³⁷ They offered the false promise of new religions ushering in a golden age;
198 Ozanam, 18 years old, published essays in refutation.³⁸

199 Close Catholic friendships grounded his spiritual life and facilitated and inspired
200 his work. Fortuitously, as a young law student in Paris, Ozanam met Andre Ampere in

³¹ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 7 (1966).

³² *Id.* at 7. It is worth noting, however, that there was restored respect in workers’ quarters for the Church and for parish priests during the February Revolution in 1848. *Id.* at 40.

³³ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 84-85 (1966).

³⁴ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 6 (1966).

³⁵ *Id.* at 66.

³⁶ The Comte Claude de Simon (1760-1825) was a leading French socialist who fought with France in the American Revolution. Schimberg at 29-30.

³⁷ *Id.* at 8-9.

³⁸ Renner at 5.

201 1831, “the Newton of electricity.”³⁹ Ozanam also subsequently developed a life long
202 friendship with Ampere’s son, Jean-Jacques.⁴⁰ A dinner invitation soon turned into
203 living with the elderly Ampere and his family during his studies in Paris. Ampere was a
204 leading scientist, erudite scholar, and, perhaps most important for the 18 year old
205 Ozanam, a pious Catholic.⁴¹ With a letter of introduction, he met Chateaubriand on New
206 Year’ Day, 1832.⁴² Chateaubriand was the leading Catholic public intellectual and
207 Romantic writer of the period whose book, *The Genius of Christianity*, published in
208 1802,⁴³ “began a religious revival in France.”⁴⁴
209 Ozanam’s personality blossomed through such friendships, and his contemporaries
210 described him as ardent, kind, and zealous.⁴⁵ He quickly formed friendships with other
211 Catholic students, who banded together, in part, because the government of King Louis-
212 Philippe, suspecting they plotted the restoration of the deposed Catholic Bourbon King
213 Charles X, spied on them.⁴⁶

214 He was soon recognized by his fellow Catholic students as their leader, “*primus*
215 *inter pares*” (first among equals).⁴⁷ After a lecture at the College of France, wherein the
216 speaker was mocking the Book of Genesis, Ozanam first met Lallier, with whom he
217 subsequently founded the apostolate known as the St. Vincent de Paul Society and with

³⁹ Auge at 2.

⁴⁰ Id. at 3.

⁴¹ Id. at 3.

⁴² Schimberg at 42-43

⁴³ Id. at 42.

⁴⁴ Auge at 4-5.

⁴⁵ Id. at 4.

⁴⁶ Id. at 9. Ozanam wrote to his mother in 1834 of the anti-Catholic environment in Paris. “We are surrounded by political parties who, because we are coming of age, want to draw us in their armies...There is no literary meeting at which spies of the government...might not be present.” Id. at 10.

⁴⁷ Id. at 11.

218 whom he became a life-long friend.⁴⁸ Ozanam and his Catholic friends formed study
219 groups to defend Catholicism against the host of intellectual assaults.⁴⁹ In 1834, he
220 firmly, and audaciously, led a letter petition to the conservative Archbishop of Paris,
221 suggesting particular homilists to preach Lenten sermons at the Cathedral, rather than the
222 insipid and ineffective designees of the Archbishop; perhaps even more incredibly, the
223 Archbishop, after initial resistance, adopted Ozanam's suggestions and appointed in 1835
224 those homilists Ozanam had recommended.⁵⁰ The Lenten sermons suggested by Ozanam
225 became so successful that they were institutionalized annually thereafter at the Cathedral.
226 They featured Pere Lacordaire, who went onto become the greatest preacher of the era
227 and who reinvigorated the Dominicans—the Order of Preachers—in France. A decade
228 older than Ozanam, they continued a life-long friendship.⁵¹

229 C. Founding the St. Vincent de Paul Society

230 In the spring of 1833, Ozanam and several Catholic student friends began meeting
231 regularly for prayer, debate, and discussion at the home of Emmanuel Joseph Bailly, a
232 forty year old Catholic owner of a print shop and publisher of a newspaper.⁵² They
233 initially called their group the conference of history and literature.⁵³ They also agreed to
234 contribute to a fund, which they would then personally distribute directly to poor people
235 in Paris.⁵⁴ By the following May, the Society had become so popular among the Catholic

⁴⁸ Id. at 12-13.

⁴⁹ Id. at 13-14.

⁵⁰ Id. at 16-17.

⁵¹ Id. at 17.

⁵² Schimberg at 66.

⁵³ Schimberg at 56-61.

⁵⁴ Auge at 20.

236 students at the University of Paris that Bailly's home could no longer accommodate all of
237 the members at their meetings.⁵⁵

238 In May, 1833, Ozanam and friends reoriented their conference on history and
239 literature to focus on charity to the poor.⁵⁶ Thus began the St. Vincent de Paul Society,
240 named in honor of St. Vincent de Paul, probably by Bailly, whose brother was a
241 Vincentian priest.⁵⁷

242 A fundamental principle of the Society is its premium upon direct, personal
243 interaction with the poor, and not on bureaucratic and anonymous administration of
244 programs; "...it was a basic rule of the Society that the members must personally visit
245 those they were assisting."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Id. at 23.

⁵⁶ Schimberg at 64-65.

⁵⁷ Id. at 66-68. In addition to Ozanam and Bailly, there were four law students and a medical student meeting in May, 1833 to found the Society. Other than the forty year old Bailly, they were 19 to 22 years of age. Id. at 66-67. None were wealthy; they were all middle class. Schimberg at 234.

⁵⁸ Id. at 41. **(N.B.: Editors: Per item 12 in your list of editorial suggestions of August**

6, I have moved the paragraph originally at lines 246-250 in the body of the text into

fnote 58. As you can see, the type font has not reconciled. I trust that you can

complete this during the next step of your edit. Thanks! DLG August 16) As a

practical matter, Ozanam and his colleagues had entre for contacts into the slums of Paris

by Sister Rosalie of the Daughters of Charity, a Vincentian religious who lived and

worked in the Mouffetard quarter working class slums of Paris since entering the order in

1801 at the age of 15 and who, at her death in 1860, was known as the Mother of the Poor

of Paris.⁵⁸

246 Ozanam and his friends began bringing wood and coal to the poor for fuel.⁵⁹ In a
247 letter to a cousin, he explained his hopes: “...we are too young to intervene in the social
248 strife. Shall we remain inactive in the midst of a world which suffers so grievously? No,
249 there is another way open to us...we can endeavor to do good to some individuals. Before
250 regenerating France we can help at least a few of her poor. Thus I hope that all young
251 people with similar desire will unite for charitable purposes and form a vast generous
252 association for the comfort of the masses.”⁶⁰

253

254 Ozanam’s vision of a “network of charity” world-wide quickly became a reality.⁶¹
255 By 1855, there were 2814 local conferences of the Society, including the United States,
256 Canada, Mexico, Asia, Africa, as well as much of Europe.⁶² Today, there are more than a
257 million members of the Society, working on every continent. It continues to be lay-led. It
258 continues to offer the opportunity to actually do something tangible and real in the
259 alleviation of poverty and suffering, and to directly practice the corporal works of mercy.

260 Christian charity was thus very different from philanthropy for Ozanam; he wrote
261 “philanthropy is a pride for which god actions are a kind of finery and which loves to
262 look at itself in the mirror. Charity is a tender mother who keeps her eyes fixed upon the
263 child that she carries in her arms, who no longer thinks about herself and who forgets her
264 beauty in her love.”⁶³ “It is a truism of Christianity that the real beneficiary of charity is
265 he who gives rather than he who receives: of this Ozanam was deeply aware, writing

⁵⁹ Schimberg at 62, 75. “This wood and coal an orator has called the ‘symbolic fuel which would start throughout the world a huge conflagration of charity.’” Id. at 75

⁶⁰ Renner at 9.

⁶¹ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 25 (1966).

⁶² Id. at 25. For more on the phenomenal and rapid international growth of the Society during Ozanam’s life, see Schimberg at 106.

⁶³ Id. at 41.

266 movingly and beautifully of it.”⁶⁴ He never sought to eradicate poverty.⁶⁵ It was
267 embedded and intractable; and, as a spiritual matter, a world without poverty would
268 make the virtue of charity largely moot. He sought, however, to ameliorate and relieve
269 poverty and suffering individually whenever and wherever possible.

270 Ultimately, charity is a powerful manifestation of love. Ozanam summarized:
271 “‘Our faith is weak because we cannot see God. But we can see the poor, and we can put
272 our finger in their wounds, and see the marks of the crown of thorns...They [the poor]
273 suffer that which we cannot suffer, they are among us as messengers of God to test our
274 justice and our charity, and to save us by our works.’”⁶⁶

275

276 D. Professional and Academic Life

277 In 1836, he returned to his parents’ home in Lyon, after receiving his doctorate in
278 law with honors in August. He had resolved as a teenager to devote his intellectual life, in
279 whatever form of vocation and career path it may ultimately take, to further Catholicism
280 and the work of the Church, and to demonstrate the truth of Christianity by and through
281 history.⁶⁷ The next four years in Lyon were not nearly as exhilarating or interesting as his
282 student years in Paris, 1831--1835, which he called his “golden years.”⁶⁸ His father died
283 in 1837, and his mother in 1839.⁶⁹ Dissatisfied with the single life, he struggled to find
284 his vocation, seriously considering the priesthood.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Id. at 41.

⁶⁵ Id. at 125.

⁶⁶ Id. at 42.

⁶⁷ Id. at 60-61, 65-66.

⁶⁸ Id. at 58.

⁶⁹ Schimberg at 121, 127.

⁷⁰ Auge at 50-51, 57. See also Schimberg at 123.

285 He became a lawyer to please his father, and he achieved early success and
286 recognition. His heart, however, was not in the practice of law⁷¹; even as a student, he
287 had written to his mother: "...if some recreation is to be allowed me, let me work in
288 literary matters, which will adorn dry jurisprudence ...I shall not at all neglect my legal
289 studies for that...Thanks be to God, I am not to be a solicitor, but a barrister, and so far a
290 pleader. Therefore, I must cultivate literature, the mother of eloquence."⁷² In his first
291 year of law practice in 1837, he made twelve court appearances, three in civil matters,
292 winning all of his cases.⁷³ He found collecting his fees another matter, however, stating:
293 "Fees come with difficulty...and the relations with business people are so unpleasant, so
294 humiliating, and so unjust, that I cannot bring myself to develop them...This profession
295 upsets me too much."⁷⁴ He had such difficulty collecting fees that he also tutored three
296 students to supplement his income.⁷⁵ He was decidedly unenthusiastic about the grim,
297 difficult fee-collecting business dimensions of tedious law practice.

298 In the spring of 1837, while practicing law in Lyon, he also began commuting to
299 Paris to begin working on his dissertation on Dante for his doctorate in literature,⁷⁶
300 receiving the doctorate in 1839.⁷⁷

301 Only 26, he was a brilliant scholar, with doctorates in both law⁷⁸ and literature
302 and fluent in several modern and classical languages. He coupled his intellectual gifts

⁷¹ Kathleen O'Meara, *Frederic Ozanam: His Life and Works* (1876) at 132.

⁷² Schimberg at 87.

⁷³ *Id.* at 120.

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 120.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 123.

⁷⁶ *Id.* at 120. His Latin doctoral thesis was *DE frequenti apud veteres poetas heroum ad inferos descensu*; his French doctoral thesis was *De la Divine Comedie et de la philoophie de Dante*. Renner at 12.

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 126-127.

⁷⁸ On April 12, 1836 he submitted two theses, one on Roman law (*De Interdictiis*) and one on French law (*De la Prescription a l'effet d'acquerir*), and received his doctorate in law with honor. *Id.* 113-114.

303 with his prodigious work ethic.⁷⁹ The college at Lyon created a chaired professorship in
304 commercial law for him in 1839.⁸⁰ Beginning on December 16, 1839, the 26 year old
305 professor gave forty seven lectures.⁸¹

306 On June 23, 1841, he married Marie-Josephine Amelie Soulacroix, the twenty one
307 year old daughter of the rector of the academy at Lyon.⁸² They were married in the
308 Church of St. Nizier in Lyon by Ozanam's brother, Alphonse, a priest.⁸³ During their
309 honeymoon in Rome, they met with Pope Gregory XVI; Ozanam gave the Pope a copy of
310 his doctoral dissertation on Dante.⁸⁴ The Ozanams had a happy marriage; on the 23rd of
311 each month, in honor of the date of their wedding anniversary, he gave his wife flowers.⁸⁵
312 They had one daughter, Marie, born in 1845.⁸⁶

313 His greatest academic love was for history and literature, not law, and he gained a
314 position as a lecturer teaching those subjects at the University of Paris in 1840. In 1844,
315 he was appointed the chaired professor of foreign literature at the University of Paris.⁸⁷
316 Ironically, for this leading Catholic intellectual, his professional education and his
317 professional life and work were at France's leading secular, and often overtly anti-
318 Catholic, university.⁸⁸

319 He was not disengaged from the people; on the contrary. In 1846, with his health
320 declining and after a full schedule of lectures as a chaired professor at the University of

⁷⁹ Auer at 62-63.

⁸⁰ Schimberg at 127.

⁸¹ Id. at 130.

⁸² Auer at 55. See also Schimberg at 144-145 and Renner at 14.

⁸³ www.famvin.org/cm/curia/vincentiana

⁸⁴ Schimberg at 145-146.

⁸⁵ Sss.famvin.org/cm/curia/vincentiana

⁸⁶ Auer at 55. See also Schimberg at 154-155.

⁸⁷ Auer at 55.

⁸⁸ Id. at 74-75 In 1844, a Catholic professor colleague, Lenormant was publicly harassed throughout his lectures, and, despite Ozanam's support, resigned his position.

321 Paris, he gave evening free lectures to workers in the crypt of the Church of St. Sulpice.⁸⁹
322 A biographer concludes: “It is not surprising that Ozanam should have been a popular
323 speaker with the working men. He counted himself one of them, and his eloquence had in
324 it a note of real personal pride when it dwelt upon the dignity and power of labor, of
325 human toil in every field.”⁹⁰ He was a fearless, engaging⁹¹ speaker and an excellent,
326 conscientious teacher.⁹²

327 The balance of his short life, until his death in 1853 at the age of 40, was spent
328 teaching and writing, with particular emphasis on the literature of the Middle Ages. His
329 view, set forth comprehensively in his book, *Civilization in the Fifth Century*,⁹³
330 published in 1852., was that of the Catholic Romantic, regarding Christianity historically
331 and empirically as most beneficial to improving the human condition, and, therefore, as
332 the truest and most useful and most reasonable of all of the world’s religions.⁹⁴ Refuting
333 Edward Gibbon’s condemnation of Christianity as the purported cause of the collapse of
334 Roman civilization ushering in the Dark Ages, Ozanam posited that Christianity instead
335 set the stage for the flourishing of culture and civilization via the Early Middle Ages, and,
336 thus, was the cause of the best features of civilized modernity.⁹⁵ “Liberty...is, according
337 to Ozanam, not alien to Catholicism, but a product of the historical influence of that
338 religion.”⁹⁶

⁸⁹ O’Meara at 245.

⁹⁰ O’Meara at 246.

⁹¹ Renner at 31.

⁹² Schimberg at 156-157. He brought students to the Church, receiving one letter from a student: ““What a great number of sermons failed to do for me, you have done: you have made me a Christian!...Accept this expression of my joy and gratitude.”” Id. at 157.

⁹³ Auer at 137-138.

⁹⁴ Auer at 65.

⁹⁵ Id. at 67-68.

⁹⁶ Id. at 88.

339 His most significant scholarship was on Dante, the subject of his doctorate in
340 literature, and his letters and essays total about ten volumes.⁹⁷ Ozanam died before
341 completing his survey of medieval literature. He lamented the unfinished state of much of
342 his scholarship shortly before his death.⁹⁸ Because of his early death, his hopes for
343 election to the Academie Francaise, the most intellectually elite circle in France, were not
344 realized. He sought public office only once, reluctantly and at the urging of friends and
345 only four days before the election in the spring of 1848 becoming a candidate to represent
346 Lyon in the National Constitutional Assembly; he lost.⁹⁹

347 His greatest academic contributions to social justice lie in his published lectures
348 and essays. Perhaps his greatest talent as a lecturer was his “great natural eloquence.”¹⁰⁰
349 Ampere said that Ozanam “prepared his lectures like [they were] a benediction and
350 delivered [them] like an orator.”¹⁰¹

351 E. Early Death and Partially Unfulfilled Promise

352 After the Revolution of 1848, he sadly realized that his life’s work of urging
353 liberal Catholic action to alleviate the plight of workers and the poor would find no
354 traction in reactionary France. No political or social program with any liberal tint
355 apparently had any viable future. He did not witness, however, the continued and
356 dramatic growth of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, his most enduring legacy.

357 He did not despair; he continued to proselytize, via his newspaper and journalistic
358 essays, his now decidedly-out-of-fashion, and dangerous, ideas that the masses of the

⁹⁷ Id. at 55. The title of his dissertation was Dante and Catholic Philosophy in the 13th Century. Schimberg at 340.

⁹⁸ Auer at 59.

⁹⁹ Id. at 107.

¹⁰⁰ Id. at 78.

¹⁰¹ Id. at 78.

359 people—the “barbarians”—remained the future best hope for social liberty and
360 democracy, and he continued to urge the Church to ally with the poor and the workers.
361 He “did not trim his sails to fit the times,” and, consequently became suspect by many
362 powerful interests.¹⁰² His Catholicism was impugned as heretically weak and warped—
363 and as unapologetically liberal--by reactionary Catholic elites in the wake of the
364 Revolution of 1848; they accused him of deserting the Church.¹⁰³

365 Always a tireless and prodigious worker, he was physically exhausted in 1846. He
366 spent the next year traveling and resting with his family in Italy. His health did not fully
367 rebound, and the tuberculosis and kidney disease that killed him in 1853 had probably
368 begun.¹⁰⁴ He nearly died of pleurisy and fever during the Easter season of 1852.¹⁰⁵ His
369 younger brother, Charles, a medical doctor, thought Ozanam may also have contracted
370 tuberculosis.¹⁰⁶

371 In early 1853, living near Florence, Italy, kidney disease manifested itself in his
372 swollen legs.¹⁰⁷ He was no longer able to teach and write, although his book, *Civilization*
373 *in the Fifth Century*, was published in 1852. He spent time whenever he was able in
374 libraries, and three months before he died, he published his book, *A Pilgrimage to the*
375 *Land of the Cid*, based upon notes taken during his trip to Spain in 1852.¹⁰⁸ He was
376 understandably frustrated by his inability to pursue his teaching and writing. He wrote to
377 a friend, “I see everything black when I dream of my lost career, of a sad existence as an

¹⁰² Id. at 130.

¹⁰³ Id. at 130-132.

¹⁰⁴ Id. at 139.

¹⁰⁵ Id. at 139.

¹⁰⁶ Id. at 139.

¹⁰⁷ Id. at 140.

¹⁰⁸ Id. at 144-145.

378 invalid and my family abandoned to all the danger of a somber future.”¹⁰⁹ He died in
379 Marseilles, France on September 8, 1853, unable to complete a return journey to Paris.¹¹⁰
380 He was beatified and declared Blessed by Pope John Paul II on August 22, 1997 at the
381 Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris.¹¹¹

382 **III. The Social Justice Vision of Ozanam**

383 Ozanam’s socio-political-economic view was rooted in his classical liberal, social
384 Catholicism, grounded in St. Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy of the common good. He was
385 opposed to laissez faire free markets, which, he believed, exacerbated, rather than
386 ameliorated, poverty. At age 21, he wrote: “I do not repudiate any form of government; I
387 regard them as different instruments to make men better and happier. I believe in
388 authority as a means, in liberty as a means, in charity as an end.”¹¹² The notion of the
389 common good was a cornerstone of his vision:...”the sacrifice of each for the advantage
390 of all: that is the Christian republic of the primitive Church of Jerusalem. It is also
391 perhaps that of the end of all time, the last and highest state to which humanity can
392 aspire.”¹¹³

393 In 1838, he wrote to an artist friend traveling to Italy: “The question which
394 divides men in our day is no longer a question of political forms, it is a social question,
395 that of deciding whether the spirit of egotism or the spirit of sacrifice is to carry the day;
396 whether society is to be a huge traffic for the benefit of the strongest, or the consecration
397 of each for the benefit of all, and above all for the protection of the weak. There are many
398 who already have too much, and who wish to possess still more; there are a greater

¹⁰⁹ Id. at 140-141.

¹¹⁰ Id. at 145.

¹¹¹ Fam.vin.org/cm/curia/vincentiana

¹¹² Schimberg at 213.

¹¹³ Id. at 213.

399 number who have not enough, and who want to seize it if it is not given to them. Between
400 these two classes of men a struggle is imminent, and it threatens to be terrible—on one
401 side the power of gold, on the other the power of despair. It is between these two
402 opposing armies that we much precipitate ourselves...”¹¹⁴

403 A. The Natural Wage

404 From his life-long commitment to, and understanding of, the poor, coupled with
405 his Catholic liberalism, Ozanam was convinced that the ideals---liberty, equality, and
406 fraternity---of the revolutions roiling France, from 1789, and in his lifetime, those of
407 1830 and 1848, were not fundamentally political; rather, they were social. For Ozanam,
408 the core problems were unemployment, poverty, and insufficient wages for the working
409 poor.¹¹⁵

410 In his twenty-fourth of forty seven published lectures in commercial law given as
411 a professor at Lyon, Ozanam developed his central thesis of the “salaire naturel”--- the
412 natural wage, precursor to the minimum wage and the living wage movements---and the
413 right of workers to form voluntary unions.¹¹⁶

414 Because most French Catholic elites aligned themselves with reactionary
415 royalists, and not with the poor masses, the country remained unstable and volatile. He
416 believed that the masses, not the upper classes, were the true allies of the Church; he
417 wrote, “the Church would do better to support herself upon the people, who are the true
418 ally of the Church, poor as she is, devout as she, blessed as she by all the benedictions of
419 the Savior.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ O’Meara at 139.

¹¹⁵ Auer at 106, 125.

¹¹⁶ Renner at 9, 12.

¹¹⁷ Id. at 106.

420 In essays in the wake of the Revolution of 1848, he chastised the middle class for
421 abandoning and betraying the working class in the Revolution of 1830, which he believed
422 led inexorably to the renewed warfare of 1848.¹¹⁸ Ozanam described himself in 1850, at
423 age 37, as “worn out in the service of my faith.”¹¹⁹

424 From these experiences came Ozanam’s concept of the natural wage. He
425 understood the congruence between work and proportionate, just compensation as rooted
426 in Christianity’s manifest superiority to pre-Christian slavery; “salary is the price of
427 work...all pain merits salary.”¹²⁰ Augering Pope Leo XIII’s famous formula in *Rerum*
428 *Novarum* in 1891 that labor and capital need one another, Ozanam insisted that “salary
429 must be proportionate to profit.”¹²¹

430 In his 24th lecture at Lyon, he reminds us that the one who “regenerated the
431 hidden world is a divine person who was hidden for thirty years in the workshop of a
432 carpenter.”¹²²

433 He propounded the workers’ right to form voluntary unions, and he saw the
434 natural wage as an important instrument to combat poverty. “The workingman, he
435 believed, was by nature entitled, at a minimum, to a wage sufficient to provide for the
436 necessities of life, the education of his children, and for the support of his old age.”¹²³

437 Opposed to free market *laissez faire*, Ozanam’s advocacy of the natural wage for
438 workers became a cornerstone of liberal, social Catholicism. “For the modern Social
439 Catholics of France considered their propaganda essentially as an attempt to revive and

¹¹⁸ *Id.* at 123.

¹¹⁹ *Id.* at 132.

¹²¹ Ozanam’s 24th Lecture, *Complete Works*.

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ *Id.*

¹²³ Schimberg at 212.

440 apply the kindly medieval Christian doctrines enforcing the duty of charity, the sinfulness
441 of avarice, the dignity of human labor, and the social responsibility of property, as
442 substitutes for the individualistic counsels of the classical Liberal economists. If the
443 Social Catholics were quick to discern the potential merits of the trade-union movement,
444 it was because they admired the medieval guilds.”¹²⁴

445 It is very important to note that Ozanam’s notion of the natural wage was not
446 synonymous with the minimum wage. The latter is pegged to subsistence existence and,
447 usually, as experience in the United States has painfully demonstrated for several
448 decades, is much less than what a worker needs to rise above poverty. Ozanam’s natural
449 wage does not depend on any particular mechanical, quantitative formula. Instead, the
450 natural wage is a dynamic reality, based on human dignity and the common good and
451 intended to provide the worker with sufficient wages to house, educate, and feed the
452 family, and to provide for retirement security. He, for example, regarded the natural wage
453 as an absolute condition for retirement, which, in turn, he regarded as “sacred
454 property.”¹²⁵

455 B. Workers’ Rights to Form Unions

456 Ozanam’s socio-political-economic vision was markedly opposed to the laissez
457 faire markets that concentrated wealth, oppressed workers, and exacerbated poverty.¹²⁶
458 He believed that enhancing workers’ rights to decent wages and to organize into unions
459 were legitimate affirmative instruments that could alleviate poverty.

460 Ozanam did not propose a mature conceptual architecture of sophisticated labor
461 unions peacefully engaged in productive collective bargaining of labor contracts with

¹²⁴ Id. at 212.

¹²⁵ Ozanam’s 24th Lecture, Complete Works.

¹²⁶ Schimberg at 206-207.

462 corporate private-sector employers. Neither did such notions launch fully developed ab
463 initio a half-century later in Pope Leo XIII's great labor encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*.
464 They were previewed, in part, however, in the thought of Frederic Ozanam. An historian
465 of the Social Catholic Movement in France concluded that Ozanam "might have used
466 the same words" as did Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*.¹²⁷ An active member of the
467 St. Vincent de Paul Society, Giuseppe Toniolo, professor of political economy at the
468 University of Paris, became the leading Italian authority on Catholic social teaching, and
469 was consulted for technical assistance by Pope Leo XIII as he drafted *Rerum*
470 *Novarum*.¹²⁸ Thus, it is certainly fair to say that Ozanam developed some of the key
471 precepts of fair wages and labor unions that were more fully elucidated in *Rerum*
472 *Novarum*.

473 He personally witnessed searing examples of desperate mobs in action during the
474 1830 and 1848 insurrections, and he was well aware of the violence of the mobs during
475 the French Revolution. Rather than being reflexively repulsed, he appreciated that the
476 masses were capable of galvanized social action for the collective good through, for
477 example, the collective action of the voluntary labor union.

478 The St. Vincent de Paul Society was not designed or intended to be any sort of
479 indirect mechanism to mollify and placate collective labor. Systematic social reform was
480 never the objective of the Society; rather, the Society sought direct, immediate, and
481 personal charitable relief of the individual poor. "That the charitable activities of the St.
482 Vincent de Paul Society did not provide any solution to the problem of the urban poor is

¹²⁷ *Id.* at 308.

¹²⁸ *Id.* at 315-316.

483 unquestionable. Christian charity could do little more than pick away at the edges of this
484 desert of human misery that was the life of many of the lower class.”¹²⁹

485 Grinding poverty, exacerbated by the neo-liberal laissez faire insouciance of the
486 government, virtually guaranteed constant ferment and inherent volatility. “Faced with
487 misery in the midst of opulence, with a government indifferent and even hostile to their
488 interests, exploited by the prosperous upper class, the workers responded with a bitter
489 hatred of society.”¹³⁰ Collective labor action, from Ozanam’s experience, took literally to
490 the streets, and was a direct threat to the government, indeed, to the entire social order.
491 This was not confined to Paris. In his home town of Lyon after the Revolution of 1830,
492 the silk workers regularly demonstrated in the streets to protest their abysmal economic
493 living and working conditions.¹³¹ “In 1834 one of these street disturbances grew into a
494 virtual civil war on a small scale as the silk workers and the army engaged in a battle of
495 several days’ duration in which artillery and other weapons of war were used against the
496 rioters.¹³² Ozanam...reported in a letter to a friend upon the evidences of battle visible in
497 Lyon. The desperate situation of the workers is shown by a banner carried by them which
498 read, “To live working or to die fighting.”¹³³ He wrote, in 1840, that more than 60,000
499 workers in Lyon were completely demoralized.¹³⁴ The French upper classes stubbornly
500 refused to recognize, let alone address, “the basic problem of employment for the
501 workers.”¹³⁵

502 C. Ozanam’s Theory of Work

¹²⁹ Id. at 35.

¹³⁰ Auer at 34.

¹³¹ Id. at 34.

¹³² Id.

¹³³ Id. at 34-35.

¹³⁴ Id. at 35.

¹³⁵ Id. at 123.

503 Ozanam regarded work as “the common law of mankind; it is the law of the
504 mind as well as of the body.”¹³⁶ He defined work as “the act which defends the wishes of
505 man, applying his abilities to the satisfaction of his needs.”¹³⁷

506 Living most of his adult life under cynical governments that fostered a political
507 economy of neo-liberalism antithetical to the poor and to the alleviation of their plight,
508 Ozanam was repulsed by the grasping bourgeoisie materialism of society; materialism
509 then, as now, was the prevailing cultural aspiration.¹³⁸

510 Poverty in Paris in the 1830s was palpable and pervasive.¹³⁹ Paris was fully
511 comparable to the destitution of Charles Dickens’ London of the same period. But, after
512 all, that was most of the human condition throughout most of history---poor and
513 suffering.

514 But, the tectonic social shifts of the embryonic Industrial Revolution were
515 inexorably underway, as Europe shifted from a rural, agricultural society to an industrial,
516 urban economy. Ozanam sensed it; so did Karl Marx; later, so did Pope Leo XIII.
517 Beyond his obvious grounding in the Scriptures and in the Magisterium of the Catholic
518 Church, Ozanam was an exquisitely astute observer of his times.

519 In 1824, when Ozanam was 11, after the elimination of Napoleon, the Bourbons
520 returned to the throne of France. Under Louis XVIII, the deep and old hostilities of the
521 masses toward the Church, which the people perceived as the ally of the corrupt ancien
522 regime, resurfaced.

¹³⁶ O’Meara at 248.

¹³⁷ Ozanam, 24th Lecture, Complete Works.

¹³⁸ Id. at 34.

¹³⁹ One sixth of the population of some quarters of Paris was on relief. Auer at 31. In 1836, 30,500 men in Paris had no regular work, and 50,000 were entirely unemployed. Id. at 31-32. Factory workers’ children had an average life span of less than two years. Id. at 32.

523 In 1830, a revolt caused the abdication of the Bourbon Charles X, the successor to
524 Louis XVIII, and the ascendancy of the Bourbon Louis-Philippe.¹⁴⁰

525 King Louis-Philippe's purported liberal, economically laissez faire, middle-class
526 government, 1830-1848, was a corrupt fraud. "In actuality, the implied impartiality and
527 nonintervention of the government in disputes between employers and workers was a
528 fiction, for the power of the State was used entirely to strengthen the position of the
529 moneyed class. The attitude of the July Monarchy to the poor was expressed by Guizot,
530 the leading minister of Louis-Philippe, when he answered the complaints of the poor
531 against the privileges of the rich with these words, 'Get rich yourselves.'"¹⁴¹

532 While the neo-liberal bourgeoisie government of Louis-Philippe sought to control
533 and suppress the seething masses the elites detested, Ozanam predicted cataclysmic
534 disaster, due to the ever-skewing disparities between the privileged and the poor. He
535 foresaw deeper class warfare a decade before Marx's Communist Manifesto. In a letter to
536 Vincentian priest and friend, Father Lallier, Ozanam summarized the stark stakes: "It is
537 the battle of those who have nothing and those who have too much; it is the violent
538 collision of opulence and poverty which makes the earth tremble under our feet."¹⁴²
539 In 1846-1847, the French economy collapsed into economic depression, and the famine
540 began in Ireland. Widespread and deep poverty was immediate and pervasive in the
541 European theoretical consciousness and lived, historical reality.

542 He did not romanticize the poor, recognizing that their own ignorance and
543 immorality contributed significantly to their predicament.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Schimberg at 201.

¹⁴¹ Auer at 34.

¹⁴² Id. at 36.

¹⁴³ Id. at 122.

544 Although he was an incisive and astute assessor of the plight of the poor and of
545 the workers, he proposed no broader social solutions.¹⁴⁴ He never set for any platform for
546 realistically defusing tensions.

547 While he was opposed to socialism per se, he appreciated the integration of the
548 otherwise potentially atomized individual into the broader community of caring persons.
549 Beginning with the family, the individual exercised duties and responsibilities, often
550 subordinating pure self-interest, for the greater good of these various social
551 corporations.¹⁴⁵ He accepted the legitimacy of private property, provided that the
552 property owner was careful not to be seduced by greed and materialism.¹⁴⁶ “Ozanam’s
553 economic theory, then, was that private property was a right and individual liberty a
554 necessity; nevertheless, the voluntary sacrifice of a part of this right for the good of
555 society was desirable, even imperative.” Family and private property were necessary; the
556 former was indispensable.¹⁴⁷ He distrusted government, but admitted, grudgingly, that a
557 legitimate government can have some necessary leadership role.¹⁴⁸

558 His theory of work was rooted in the classic Catholic conception of the common
559 good.¹⁴⁹ He considered work as the “law of regeneration” applicable to everyone.
560 Likewise, everyone, in their own way, was called to work: “Useless servants of God we
561 may be...lazy ones never.”¹⁵⁰

562 Ozanam also believed that work could be inherently good and dignified, and that
563 all workers should be treated with dignity. He summarized: “All can do honor to the

¹⁴⁴ Id. at 125-126.

¹⁴⁵ Id. at 37.

¹⁴⁶ Id. at 37, 122.

¹⁴⁷ Id. at 38, 122. See also Renner at 67.

¹⁴⁸ Id. at 38.

¹⁴⁹ Id. at 37.

¹⁵⁰ Id. at 61.

564 work-room by probity and sobriety, by the charity which respects masters, unites
565 companions, protects apprentices.”¹⁵¹

566

567 He understood free labor as reflecting the essence of Christianity, triumphing over
568 the slavery of paganism. “His works abound in fine passages on labour as one of the
569 regenerating forces of the world, and of arguments and examples tending to show how
570 the labourer, oppressed and despised by Paganism, was rehabilitated by Christianity. ‘Let
571 us see what Christianity has done for the ouvriers...Free labor has no greater enemy than
572 slavery, consequently the ancients, who held to slavery, trampled free labour under foot;
573 they spurned it, and stigmatized it with the most offensive names.”¹⁵²

574 Until Pope Leo XIII’s first labor encyclical in 1891, the Church institutionally and
575 officially remained silent on workers’ rights throughout virtually all of the nineteenth
576 century and for much of the Industrial Revolution. The Church’s institutional silence
577 makes Ozanam’s accomplishments all-the-more startling, and perhaps explains why the
578 work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was so immediately attractive to so many persons
579 with material means. Working from classic, timeless Catholic precepts, he galvanized,
580 virtually overnight and by his personal example in his early twenties, a world-wide and
581 enduring movement to alleviate poverty

582 Workers, infuriated with the reactionary Church allied with the repressive
583 Bourbon Charles X, directed much of their rage against the Church during the 1830
584 Revolution. Due perhaps in part to the social outreach to the poor by the St. Vincent de
585 Paul Society, however, some degree of reconciliation occurred between labor and the

¹⁵¹ Schimberg at 246.

¹⁵² O’Meara at 246-247.

586 Church, perceived by many workers as an ally and friend in the Revolution of 1848.¹⁵³
587 Workers who sacked the residence of Archbishop de Quelen of Paris in 1830 respectfully
588 attended his funeral in 1840.¹⁵⁴ Catholicism was reinvigorated, and thousands returned to
589 services in Paris alone.¹⁵⁵

590 In the Revolution of 1848, the Church in Paris was closely allied with the
591 revolutionaries in the streets. The 1848 uprising was directed only against the unpopular
592 monarchy of Louis-Philippe, and not, unlike in 1830, also against the Church. King
593 Louis-Philippe had not been popular with the Church, and many bishops, including
594 Ozanam's Archbishop Affre of Paris, endorsed the republican revolutionary government
595 after Louis-Philippe fled for exile in England.¹⁵⁶ Archbishop Affre allowed churches to
596 be used as hospitals to treat the wounded and to collect money for their support. During
597 the street fighting in Paris in February, 1848, fighters went to Mass, and "revolutionary
598 pamphleteers and agitators spoke of Jesus, the proletariat of Nazareth, and announced
599 that the victory of the Republic was the coming of the kingdom of God."¹⁵⁷

600 During June 22-25, 1848, however, the army sealed off and methodically crushed
601 the workers' barricades throughout Paris, destroying any viable liberal Catholic and
602 workers' alliances in France for a century. Perhaps most poignantly, Archbishop Affre,
603 accompanied by Ozanam to the barricades to mediate a ceasefire, was shot dead when
604 gunfire erupted;¹⁵⁸ "...his last words were 'At least let my blood be the last that you

¹⁵³ Auer at 40.

¹⁵⁴ Id. at 95.

¹⁵⁵ Id. at 95.

¹⁵⁶ Id. at 105.

¹⁵⁷ Id. at 105.

¹⁵⁸ Id. at 116. In 1871, his successor as Archbishop of Paris was kidnapped and murdered by radical insurrectionists during the Paris Commune.

605 shed.”¹⁵⁹ De Tocqueville estimated that 100,000 workers were involved in the summer
606 street battles against the army in Paris, the starkest class warfare, literally, to have thus far
607 occurred in Europe.¹⁶⁰ More than 16,000 were killed, and the army took another 14,000
608 as prisoners.¹⁶¹

609 Working class consciousness consequently became radicalized with the
610 communist left over the next several decades, and abandoned as futile any liberal
611 Catholic centrist alliance. After June, 1848, the rest of France—peasant, bourgeois, and
612 aristocrat---became very conservative, and Napoleon III ruled until 1870.¹⁶²

613 Ozanam was disillusioned by the violence, the anarchy, and the fighting in the
614 streets.¹⁶³ This violent “barbarian invasion”¹⁶⁴ was hardly his vision of a liberal Catholic
615 workers’ coalition. In April, 1848, he became a member of the Parisian National Guard,
616 consisting primarily of upper class elites. Temperamentally and physically unsuited for
617 military duty, he willingly joined; fortuitously, he was not in combat in the streets of
618 Paris.¹⁶⁵

619 Unlike many of his formerly liberal Catholic colleagues, Ozanam did not despair
620 or lose hope in the ultimate possibilities of broad social justice for workers through
621 liberal Catholic apostolates and alliances. He remained convinced that the poor and the
622 workers’ causes, albeit not always their means, were just. In September, 1848, he wrote
623 that he continued “to believe in the possibility of Christian democracy.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Schimberg at 221.

¹⁶⁰ Auer at 112-117.

¹⁶¹ Schimberg at 219.

¹⁶² Auer at 112.

¹⁶³ Id. at 113.

¹⁶⁴ Id. at 114.

¹⁶⁵ Id. at 114.

¹⁶⁶ Id. at 121.

624 In newspaper essays concurrent with the Revolution of 1848, he renewed his
625 “journalistic campaign of social justice for the workers.”¹⁶⁷ He regarded economic misery
626 as the root of the waves of insurrection; in late 1848, 267,000 people in Paris suffered
627 from hunger and, in one representative Paris district where street fighting was
628 concentrated against the army, 70,000 of 90,000 people required public assistance.”¹⁶⁸
629 He urged a “crusade” of “charitable agitation” and a reform of institutions after the
630 Revolution.¹⁶⁹ Shortly thereafter, however, he despaired about the ineffectiveness of
631 sociopolitical journalism to influence substantive change, and, for the five remaining
632 years of his life, he did not actively pursue any active journalistic role.¹⁷⁰

633 Ozanam put perhaps too much faith in technology, and did not foresee the
634 dehumanizing negatives of the mechanization of work accelerated by the Industrial
635 Revolution. He most immediately hoped that mechanization would substantially relieve
636 workers from the drudgery and danger of much of early nineteenth century work.¹⁷¹

637 Ozanam certainly developed broad social awareness of the necessity of justice for
638 workers, belief in the possibilities of social progress, and social consciousness of the
639 plight of the urban poor.¹⁷²

640 D. Subsequent Influences

641 Ozanam’s influences in the practice of personalism continue most tangibly today
642 in the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and in symmetrical groups such as the
643 Catholic Worker movement.

¹⁶⁷ Id. at 124.

¹⁶⁸ Id. at 124.

¹⁶⁹ Id. at 126-127.

¹⁷⁰ Schimberg at 190.

¹⁷¹ Auer at 94.

¹⁷² Id. at 90.

644 His concept of the natural wage was a precursor to the minimum wage movement
645 during the New Deal, and has a continuing legacy in the contemporary living wage
646 initiatives successfully implemented in many municipalities throughout the United States.

647 A century after his death in 1853, the worker priest movement in Belgium and
648 France put into practice his counsel of priests devoting themselves to the poor.¹⁷³ He
649 wrote, concerning the priests, “busy yourselves always with the servants as well as with
650 masters, and with workers as well as the rich; it is henceforth the only way of salvation
651 for the Church in France. It is necessary that pastors give up their little bourgeois
652 parishes, flocks of the elite in the midst of an immense population which they do not
653 know.”¹⁷⁴ He also wrote, in 1848: “If more Catholics, and above all more clergy, had
654 concerned themselves with the working classes for the last ten years, we should feel
655 more certain of the future.”¹⁷⁵

656 **III. Conclusion**

657 Ozanam is a complex, courageous figure. He is an important role model for those
658 striving to build the good society, coupling academic and intellectual insight with direct,
659 personal action. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is his most impressive achievement. His
660 intellectual contributions to social justice, especially the notion of the natural wage and
661 the advocacy of greater workers’ rights, also have a powerful, tangible legacy worthy of
662 study and continued effectuation today through, for example, the living wage initiatives.

¹⁷³ The worker priest movement in Belgium and France (1943-1954) began with priests sharing labor with and among the people incarcerated in Nazi forced labor camps during World War II. Their mission was the Christianization of the working classes. After the war, many priests continued their apostolate of living and working secular jobs among the general populations, rather than living apart from the people in clerical rectories. Because of concerns with affinities with the Communist Party, Pope Pius XII suppressed the movement in 1954. OSCAR L. ARNAL, *PRIESTS IN WORKING CLASS BLUE: THE HISTORY OF THE WORKER PRIESTS (1943-1954)* (Paulist Press, 1986).

¹⁷⁴ Auer at 107.

¹⁷⁵ Renner at 65. See also Schimberg at 209.

663 He was a champion of classic liberalism, not to be confused with more narrow
664 political liberalism.¹⁷⁶ He unequivocally aligned himself with liberal Catholicism,
665 seeking harmony, rather than intractable opposition, between the Church and modern
666 society.¹⁷⁷ “From the period of his arrival in Paris, Ozanam was heart and soul devoted to
667 the liberal Catholic movement. His historical studies convinced him that the Church had
668 to work in the modern world...”¹⁷⁸

669 As one biographer summarized: “...Catholic Liberalism meant that the adjective
670 ‘Catholic’ governed the noun ‘Liberalism,’ and indicated unquestioned doctrinal
671 orthodoxy, submission to the teaching authority of the Church, and a correct, indeed
672 ardent, attachment to the Sovereign Pontiff.”¹⁷⁹

673 Ozanam urged that the Church reconcile itself with modern society, and accept
674 the legitimate achievement and fundamental principle of the French Revolution—liberty,
675 as fully compatible with Catholicism. Ozanam was a champion of liberty, which he
676 regarded as fostered and developed especially by the Catholic Church in the Early Middle
677 Ages, and, more recently, advanced as one of the legitimate features of the French
678 Revolution. He understood liberty not as raw exultation of individual absolute autonomy,
679 but, rather, as positive, social regard for one another.¹⁸⁰

680 He opposed the reactionary Bourbon motif of Charles X, deposed in 1830. He
681 rejected the Bourbon theme of the purported union of the throne and the altar,¹⁸¹ and he

¹⁷⁶ Auer at 83-84.

¹⁷⁷ Id. at 79-80.

¹⁷⁸ Id. at 81.

¹⁷⁹ Schimberg at 225.

¹⁸⁰ Auer at 89.

¹⁸¹ Id. at 85. He compared the old royalism to a “glorious invalid,” which, with its “wooden leg, cannot march at the same speed as the new generation.” Id. at 87.

682 advocated the separation of church and state as conducive to liberty.¹⁸² He considered
683 himself a monarchist in the abstract, but pronounced democracy more workable and
684 acceptable.¹⁸³ His adult life was bracketed by the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the latter
685 of which swept Europe and crushed the liberal Catholic French alliance Ozanam worked
686 so hard to foster all his life.¹⁸⁴

687 He believed in, and practiced, vigorous intellectual, respectful, rational
688 engagement in debate and discussion as the best means to dialogue with those opposed to
689 Catholicism. He rejected invective, polemics, and condemnation. He believed in his
690 opponents' right to speak.¹⁸⁵ He subscribed to the Augustinian notion that truth is
691 integrated, and that all truths, even those completely divorced from all religion, will lead
692 to the source of all truth—to God; he wrote, “...it is not permissible to deny any truth,
693 however profane, however embarrassing...God is at the end.”¹⁸⁶

694 While these are unproblematic axioms in the contemporary liberal state, and in
695 the Catholic Church after Vatican II, they were hardly so in the France and the Catholic
696 Church of the mid-19th century.¹⁸⁷ Pope Pius IX had yet to condemn many of the tenets
697 of modernism and liberalism in the Syllabus of Errors in 1864, and the Papal States were
698 a temporal presence in European politics. Slavery continued in many parts of the world,
699 and the Civil War in the United States did not occur until eight years after Ozanam's
700 death.

¹⁸² Id. at 87.

¹⁸³ Id. at 86.

¹⁸⁴ Id. at 100-103. During the spring of 1848, Ozanam wrote an essay, *The Danger and Hopes of Rome*, arguing that a good new liberal order would confidently emerge from the dissolution of the former regime, just as the fall of Rome led to the civilization and culture of the Middle Ages.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 14 (1966).

¹⁸⁶ Id. at 61, 70.

¹⁸⁷ Id. at 81. Pope Gregory XVI condemned *L'Avenir* (*The Future*), a liberal Catholic newspaper urging the Church to come to terms with the French Revolution. The paper was the project of some of Ozanam's friends at the University of Paris in the early 1830s.

701 Liberalism was deeply suspect in many royalist and conservative quarters of the
702 Catholic Church of 19th century France; interestingly enough, the conservative
703 Archbishop de Quelen eventually became a supporter of Ozanam, and his successor,
704 Archbishop Affre, publicly endorsed Ozanam's work and writing.¹⁸⁸

705 More broadly, however, the Church's antipathy toward liberalism accelerated
706 dramatically during the reign of the charismatic Pope Pius IX, who, ironically, was
707 initially perceived as liberal when he began his papacy in 1846.¹⁸⁹ Two years later, during
708 the instability of the Revolution of 1848, Pius IX fled from Rome.¹⁹⁰ Sadly, any realistic
709 prospects for the flowering of liberal Catholicism in France were completely crushed
710 when the army ruthlessly annihilated the working poor in pitched street battles
711 throughout Paris in June, 1848.¹⁹¹ Napoleon III, who then seized control of the
712 government, cemented the conservative alliance with the completely disillusioned former
713 liberal, and, henceforth, archconservative Pope Pius IX, when his French army drove the
714 Italian republicans from Rome and restored Pope Pius IX to the Vatican from exile in
715 1849.¹⁹²

716 Even the St. Vincent de Paul Society was suspect in some reactionary quarters for
717 its hints of liberalism, perhaps even for being revolutionary; it was banned in the Grand
718 Duchy of Tuscany in 1852 for alleged liberalism.¹⁹³ Reactionaries feared that the charity
719 of the Society might be used to further political, secular agendae opposed to prevailing
720 power; "Ozanam testified that one of the obstacles to the extension of the Society was the

¹⁸⁸ Id. at 95.

¹⁸⁹ Id. at 96. The Church's distrust of modernism and liberalism did not dissipate substantially until Vatican II.

¹⁹⁰ Id. at 98.

¹⁹¹ Id. at 97.

¹⁹² Id. at 119.

¹⁹³ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 27 (1966).

721 vague fear that under the veil of charity there was a political end. For this reason the
722 leaders of the organization made every effort to divorce it from all political connections;
723 all Catholics were welcome to join, no matter what their political philosophy or
724 position.”¹⁹⁴

725 Paradoxically, Ozanam, one of the Church’s great champions and premier
726 practitioner of Catholic social teaching through the work of the St. Vincent de Paul
727 Society, operated firmly within the liberal intellectual motif to provide the platforms for
728 the natural, living wage and for the rights of workers.

729 At a time when the Catholic Church was on the defensive and under assault,
730 especially in France, Ozanam was unfailingly optimistic, affirmative, and progressive.
731 Indeed, the “positive character” of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, in those challenging
732 first few decades, was its, and perhaps Ozanam’s, most significant feature.¹⁹⁵ Unlike
733 many liberal French Catholics, to say nothing of conservative royalists, he did not fear
734 and loathe the poor; he, literally, embraced them. “Ozanam can be placed beside his
735 astute Catholic contemporary, Alexis de Tocqueville, in his conviction that the future is
736 in the hands of the masses, for better or for worse.”¹⁹⁶ Even after the Revolution of 1848,
737 Ozanam championed democracy, “not simply as a political system, but as a new, popular,
738 mass, egalitarian society.”¹⁹⁷ He urged that Catholics ally with “the barbarians,”
739 understood, not as anarchists and extremists, but as the democratic masses of the
740 people.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Id. at 27.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 27 (1966).

¹⁹⁶ Id. at 86.

¹⁹⁷ Id. at 103.

¹⁹⁸ Id. at 103.

741 Perhaps there was considerable utopianism and naivete about much of Ozanam's
742 world view, believing that private charity could significantly ameliorate deeply
743 embedded structural poverty.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, he firmly believed that the widespread
744 practice of direct, personal individual charity to individual poor was the best hope for
745 avoiding social disaster.²⁰⁰ "The primary means by which Ozanam hoped to improve the
746 life of the urban poor was the widespread practice of Christian charity. It was upon this
747 virtue that he placed his chief hope for the future. Catholics, through the practice of
748 charity, must mediate and reconcile the conflicting interests of the rich and the poor; this
749 was an idea that constantly reoccurred in his correspondence in the years prior to the
750 Revolution of 1848."²⁰¹

751 After the Revolution of 1848, Ozanam remained hopeful, though chastened and
752 realizing that the struggle for social justice would be longer and much more difficult than
753 he had initially imagined in the 1830s and 1840s.²⁰² In his book, *Civilization in the Fifth*
754 *Century*, published in 1852, a year before his death, he wrote: "It remains therefore to
755 leave a place for liberty in human destiny, and consequently a place for error and crime.
756 There will be some days of sickness, some lost years, some centuries that do not move
757 forward, some centuries that retrogress...In these periods of disorder God lets the people
758 be masters of their own acts, but He has his hand on society. He does not permit it to
759 deviate beyond a certain point, and it is there that He awaits it in order to lead it by a

¹⁹⁹ Id. at 38-39, 42.

²⁰⁰ Id. at 38.

²⁰¹ Id. at 38.

²⁰² Id. at 136-137.

760 painful and shadowy detour to this perfection that they have forgotten for the
761 moment.”²⁰³

762 Liberalism simply did not have sufficiently deep roots in France after the
763 Revolutions of 1789, 1830, or 1848 to allow Ozanam’s agenda for workers’ rights to
764 gain positive traction. His idea of the masses of the people—the “barbarians”---being the
765 future of liberty and democracy was, at best, deeply suspect among the French and
766 Catholic elites. Other than perhaps a few years in the 1840s, when Ozanam and the
767 supportive Archbishop of Paris coalesced around liberal Catholic ideas and initiatives, the
768 Catholic Church in France remained aligned with conservative, reactionary, and royalist
769 power.

770 Through the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Ozanam helped French
771 Catholics develop social conscience.²⁰⁴ And, even if the Society did little to ameliorate
772 embedded, structural poverty, it unquestionably alleviated many individual instances of
773 suffering and want.²⁰⁵

774 Ozanam is a refreshing exception to another norm. In the Catholic litany of saints,
775 very few are married laypersons. Likewise, especially before Vatican II, very few
776 married laypersons founded, and led, major Catholic organizations, such as the St.
777 Vincent de Paul Society. One of the early, and enduring, attractions of the Society has
778 been its lay character and leadership.²⁰⁶ Ozanam found great solace and spiritual strength

²⁰³ Id. at 138.

²⁰⁴ Id. at 41.

²⁰⁵ Id. at 42.

²⁰⁶ Id. at 29.

779 in his family life, and refined the necessity of selflessness in marriage to spur his ideas
780 regarding external charity.²⁰⁷

781 He did not live to see the Church's first great labor and social, *Rerum Novarum*,
782 promulgated by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, incorporating his advocacy of the natural wage
783 and of broader workers' rights. He would have been pleased to see the practice of
784 personalism given deeper philosophical structure by Edmund Mounier in his journal *Le*
785 *Espirit* in the 1920s and 1930s; he would have been even more gratified to see the
786 practice of personalism given renewed vigor by French peasant expatriate Peter Maurin,
787 co-founder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality for the poor
788 and homeless in New York City in 1933.

789 He would have been pleased to see French worker priests living and working
790 among laboring and poor people a century after his death. He would have been
791 profoundly disappointed when they were suppressed by the hierarchy.

792 He would be pleased to see the living wage initiative, based on his theory of the
793 natural wage, successfully moving forward in many municipalities in the United States
794 today.

795 Ultimately, Ozanam was an exemplary Catholic scholar and eloquent public
796 intellectual in a cultural milieu often overtly hostile to the Catholic Church. He fearlessly
797 championed workers' rights, and his concept of the natural wage took root in the great
798 labor encyclicals and in secular wage legislation that continue to resonate today in the
799 living wage initiatives. He was, however, that rarest of intellectuals, serving, directly and
800 personally, and throughout his entire adult life, the immediate needs of the poor. The
801 poor were not an abstraction; they were, and are, his brothers in Christ.

²⁰⁷ *Id.* at 57.

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