



Ozanam: On Alleviation of Individual Suffering, and Systemic Change

When the Socialists taunted Ozanam with confining his efforts to the alleviation of individual suffering without getting at the causes, he countered that society can only be reformed by first reforming the character of the individuals making up society. He went on to attack the Socialists for breeding hatred and war, in contrast to the Church's approach of building a new world by fostering justice and charity...

In his words:

“Certainly we must endeavor to go to the root of the evil and by wise and social reforms try to reduce the widespread distress. But we are convinced that a knowledge of the reforms ...is to be learned not so much by pondering over books or by discussions among politicians, as by going to visit the garrets in which the poor live; by sitting at the bedside of the dying, by feeling the cold which they feel, and by learning from their own lips the causes of their woes.”

In his words:

“When we have done this, not simply for a few months, but for many years, when we have studied the poor in their homes, in the schools and in the hospitals, not only in one, but in many cities, then we really begin to understand a little of this formidable problem of poverty. Then we have the right to suggest reforms which, instead of putting the fear of God into their hearts, would bring peace and hope to all.”

Henry Hughes, Frederic Ozanam. St. Louis: Herder, 1933, p.60

Source:

Frédéric Ozanam - A Layman for Now by Shaun McCarty, S.T.

http://famvin.org/wiki/Frédéric_Ozanam_-_A_Layman_for_Now_-_Shaun_McCarty,_S.T.