



**THE SPIRITUALITY OF BLESSED FREDERIC**  
**OCTOBER 30 RETREAT (Dan Smith)**

# A1 THE SPIRITUALITY OF BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM (1813-1853)

## BACKGROUND:

- Main founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.
- A rare individual of intellectual genius and extraordinary holiness.
- A husband and father, professor and researcher, journalist and author, apologist and defender of the Faith.

(Rules and Statutes, p. 145)

## A2 SPIRITUALITY:

- Amid the godless society in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Blessed Frederic could not help but observe the desperate plight of the poor in Paris.
- He was challenged by his fellow students, who were mostly atheists, to do something positive to help the needy, the widow, the orphan and the oppressed.

## A3 SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE:

- 1) The new Society adopted St Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) as their patron. He had dedicated his life to the service of the poor.
- 2) Blessed Frederic and the students who founded the Society asked Sister Rosalie Rendu (1786-1856), a Daughter of Charity of St Vincent de Paul to teach them how to minister to the poor with love and respect.
- 3) The founders placed the Society under the protection of the Blessed Virgin.
- 4) They chose as their motto: “serviens in spe”, serving in hope. Their hope was to get the needy out of their poverty for good.

“While he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him; so he went in and sat at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, ‘ Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give for alms those things which are within; and behold everything is clean for you.’” (Luke, 11: 37-41)

### TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Friends, Jesus concludes today’s Gospel by prescribing giving alms as a key to holiness. I’ve quoted to you before some of the breathtaking remarks of saints and popes about almsgiving: Leo XIII says, “Once the demands of necessity and propriety have been met, the rest of your money belongs to the poor.” John Chrysostom says, “The man who has two shirts in his closet, one belongs to him; the other belongs to the man who has no shirt.”

The deepest root of all of this is in the prophets, who continually rail against those who are indifferent to the poor. The prophets teach us that compassion is key to biblical ethics, feeling the pain of others in our own hearts. We’re not dealing with an abstract Aristotelian moral philosophy, but rather with something more visceral.

This is precisely why the two great commandments are so tightly linked: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . and love your neighbor as yourself.” In loving God you feel the feelings of God, and God is compassionate to the poor and oppressed. That’s all the argument that a biblical person needs.

Bishop Robert Barron

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