

# Spiritual Readings for the month of February 2023

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

## THE RULE AND STATUTES OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL CANADA

*Updated 2019, printed April 2020*

Available on the SSVP Toronto Central website under members area/governance.

*“Help honours when, to the bread that nourishes, it adds the visit that consoles, the advice that enlightens, the friendly shake of the hand that lifts up sinking courage when it treats the poor [man] person with respect, not only as an equal but as a superior, since [he] this person is suffering that which we would perhaps not be able to bear ourselves; since he or she is among us as the messenger of God, sent to put our justice and charity to the test, and to save us by our works.”*

(Frédéric Ozanam, from an article in L'Ère nouvelle, October 21, 1848).

### Reflection

This paragraph, written by the founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, is the prologue to the updated Canadian edition of the International Rule and Statutes of the SSVP, which has been the reference guide for the charity since the beginning. His words are an invitation to reflect honestly on the experience of Vincentian service looking at both the nature of our friendships with our Neighbours in Need, respectful or sometimes otherwise, and at how our capacity for ‘justice and charity’ is being tested.

### Questions

Frederic Ozanam [1813-1853] wrote this piece over 150 years ago; in what ways, today, do these words both -

1. Inspire or challenge you as a SSVP volunteer
2. Disturb you or bring out a negative response.

*- Submitted by Vincentian Yvonne Gray, St. Anselm's Conference, TEPC*

## What might be spiritual value for you in travel?

Did you know that in addition to scholarly publications (e.g., on German literature; on the work of Italian poet Dante Alighieri), Frédéric Ozanam wrote a travelogue? Near the end of his life, Ozanam wrote recollections of a trip that he had made in 1852 to Spain.<sup>1</sup>

Ozanam's travelogue focuses on his time in the northern Spanish city of *Burgos*, home of the Mediaeval Castilian King Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar (or *El-Cid*). In his little book, Ozanam writes of many things of interest to travellers and specifically Christian travellers, including the natural beauty of the landscape, the bullfighting tradition, and the local architecture, folklore and history. Striking is the way in which Ozanam always seems to be learning; always noticing something of spiritual value. At one point, he comments:

“The Burgos cathedral appears first as a young building, slender and not without majesty, but which above all has elegance and grace... At the two sides, the towers soar, rising to a prodigious height of spires... These two [towers] rise equally to three hundred feet; they defy the hurricanes in Castile, and yet nothing equals the delicacy of the network of spires. The embroidery of stone which surrounds them contains on one side the words *Lamb of God*, and on the other *Peace to you*. These pacifying words, proclaimed in a violent century, were no less miraculous than the two spires built in the midst of storms.”<sup>2</sup>

### Reflection

Can you think of some way in which you were moved, or touched, during travel? If you have gone on pilgrimage or vacation, or on a working trip, did you see or do something which remains spiritually meaningful?

### Prayer

Lord, may we learn to see our experiences, near or far from home, pointing us towards your beauty and your love, and may we use such experiences in your service of those who need a helping hand, anywhere we go.

- Submitted by Vincentian Alex Damm, St. Jerome Conference, PNPC

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<sup>1</sup> A.-F. Ozanam, *Un Pèlerinage au Pays du Cid* (Tours : Maison Alfred Mame et Fils, c. 1890).

<sup>2</sup> Ozanam, *Un Pèlerinage*, 73-74 (trans. Alex). For a photograph of the Burgos cathedral, see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/316/gallery/>