

Finding and Bringing the Presence of God

The Roots of Ozanam's
Passion for Charity & Justice



Let us reflect on these words from our Lord Jesus Christ, recalling his unity and presence among us: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Lord Jesus, deepen our Vincentian spirit of friendship during this meeting. Make us responsive to the Christian calling to seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived so that we may bring them your love.

give them the privilege of seeing the poor,
of being shown Our Lord Jesus Christ not
only in holy pictures painted by great
artists but of being shown Jesus Christ and
his wounds in the person of the poor.

Letter to P Pendola, 19 July 1853



*“I think I could become either
a very wicked or a very virtuous man.
I hope I have now chosen the latter
and will be all my life at least a
good Frenchman, a good friend
and a good Christian.”*

*Frederic Ozanam to August Materne
June 5 1830 when he was 17 years old*



**Attained holiness as a layman through living
the Gospel fully in all aspects of his life**

**Son & Student
Friend & Founder
Lawyer & Professor
Scholar & Author
Husband & Father
Journalist & Politician
French Citizen
Catholic**



"To relate the life of a saint and therefore promote his memory has a moral goal. The content of the life of the saint depends on the values that a religious group wants to promote, those that it deems most necessary to its era.

The virtues are more or less differently organized depending on the necessities of the times..."

*from "The Foundation"
by Charles Mercier*

Finding and Bringing the Presence of God

Ozanam's Passion for Charity & Justice



Born in Chaotic & Revolutionary Times



The background of the slide is a historical painting depicting the storming of the Bastille. The scene is filled with smoke and fire, with the massive stone structure of the prison being dismantled. In the foreground, a crowd of people, some on horseback and some on foot, are engaged in the struggle. The overall atmosphere is one of chaos and revolution.

The French Revolution Tore Down All Institutions and Systems

All Systems Distrrupted

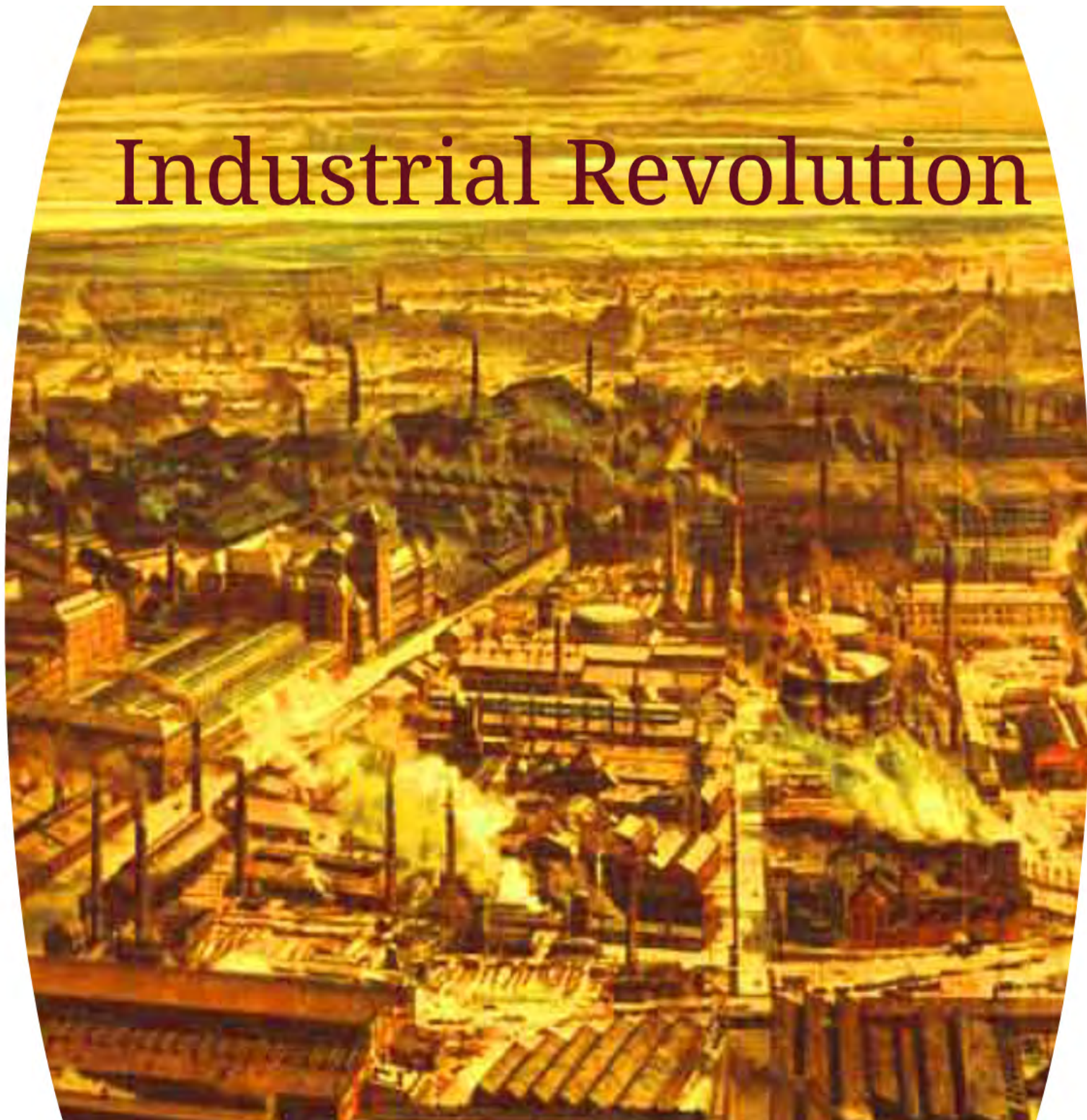
Political
Justice
Military
Religious
Economic
Charitable
Educational





**Revolutionary regime ends 1799 by Coup d'Etat
Napoleon declares himself Emperor 1804
begins reinstitutionalization & reforms
deposed in 1814**

Industrial Revolution



Fraternité Liberté Egalité Fraternité Liberté
Egalité Fraternité Liberté Egalité Fraternité
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Finding and Bringing the Presence of God

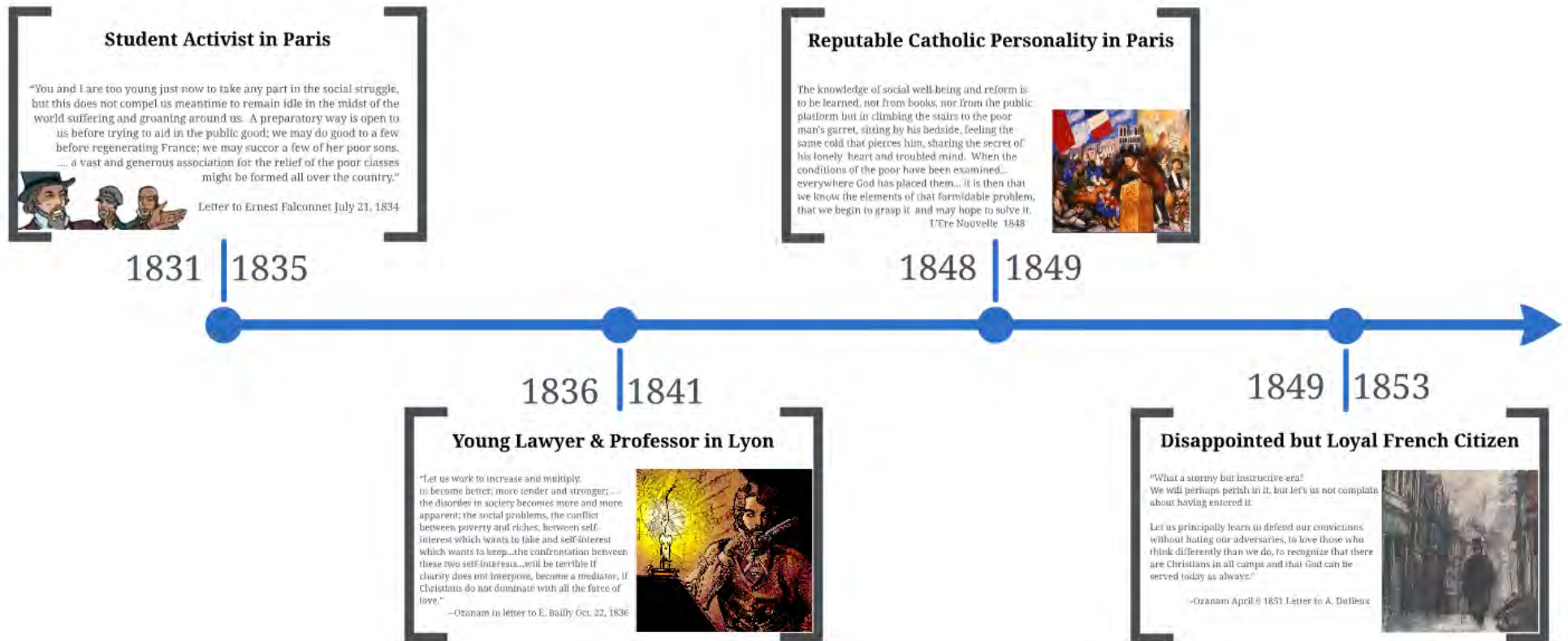
Ozanam's Passion for Charity & Justice





- ✓ The development of Ozanam's insights into the relationship of faith, charity and justice.
- ✓ Fundamental concepts we can learn from Ozanam in organizing to reform systems that impoverish people.

Progression of Ozanam's Thought on Faith, Charity & Justice



Student Activist in Paris

“You and I are too young just now to take any part in the social struggle, but this does not compel us meantime to remain idle in the midst of the world suffering and groaning around us. A preparatory way is open to us before trying to aid in the public good; we may do good to a few before regenerating France; we may succor a few of her poor sons. a vast and generous association for the relief of the poor classes might be formed all over the country.”

Letter to Ernest Falconnet July 21, 1834



1831 | 1835

1836 | 1841

Young Lawyer & Professor in Lyon

“Let us work to increase and multiply, to become better, more tender and stronger; the disorder in society becomes more and more apparent; the social problems, the conflict between poverty and riches, between self-interest which wants to take and self-interest which wants to keep...the confrontation between these two self-interests...will be terrible if charity does not interpose, become a mediator, if Christians do not dominate with all the force of love.”

—Ozanam in letter to E. Bailly Oct. 22, 1836



Reputable Catholic Personality in Paris

The knowledge of social well-being and reform is to be learned, not from books, nor from the public platform but in climbing the stairs to the poor man's garret, sitting by his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him, sharing the secret of his lonely heart and troubled mind. When the conditions of the poor have been examined... everywhere God has placed them... it is then that we know the elements of that formidable problem, that we begin to grasp it and may hope to solve it.

L'Ere Nouvelle 1848



1848 | 1849

1849 | 1853

Disappointed but Loyal French Citizen

“What a stormy but instructive era!
We will perhaps perish in it, but let’s us not complain
about having entered it.

Let us principally learn to defend our convictions
without hating our adversaries, to love those who
think differently than we do, to recognize that there
are Christians in all camps and that God can be
served today as always.”

-Ozanam April 9 1851 Letter to A. Dufieux

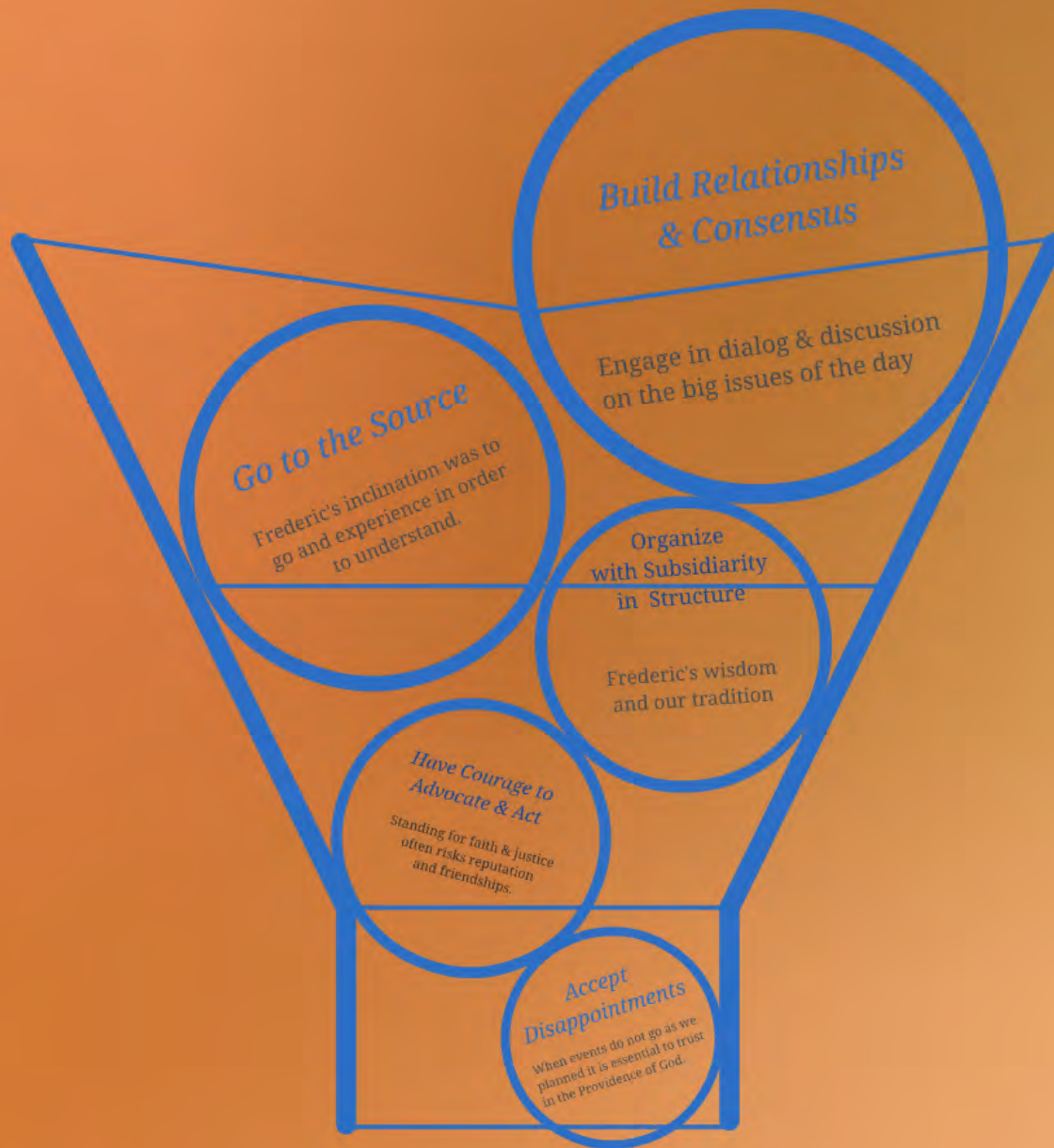


Finding and Bringing the Presence of God

Ozanam's Passion for Charity & Justice



Organizing to Find and Bring the Presence of God



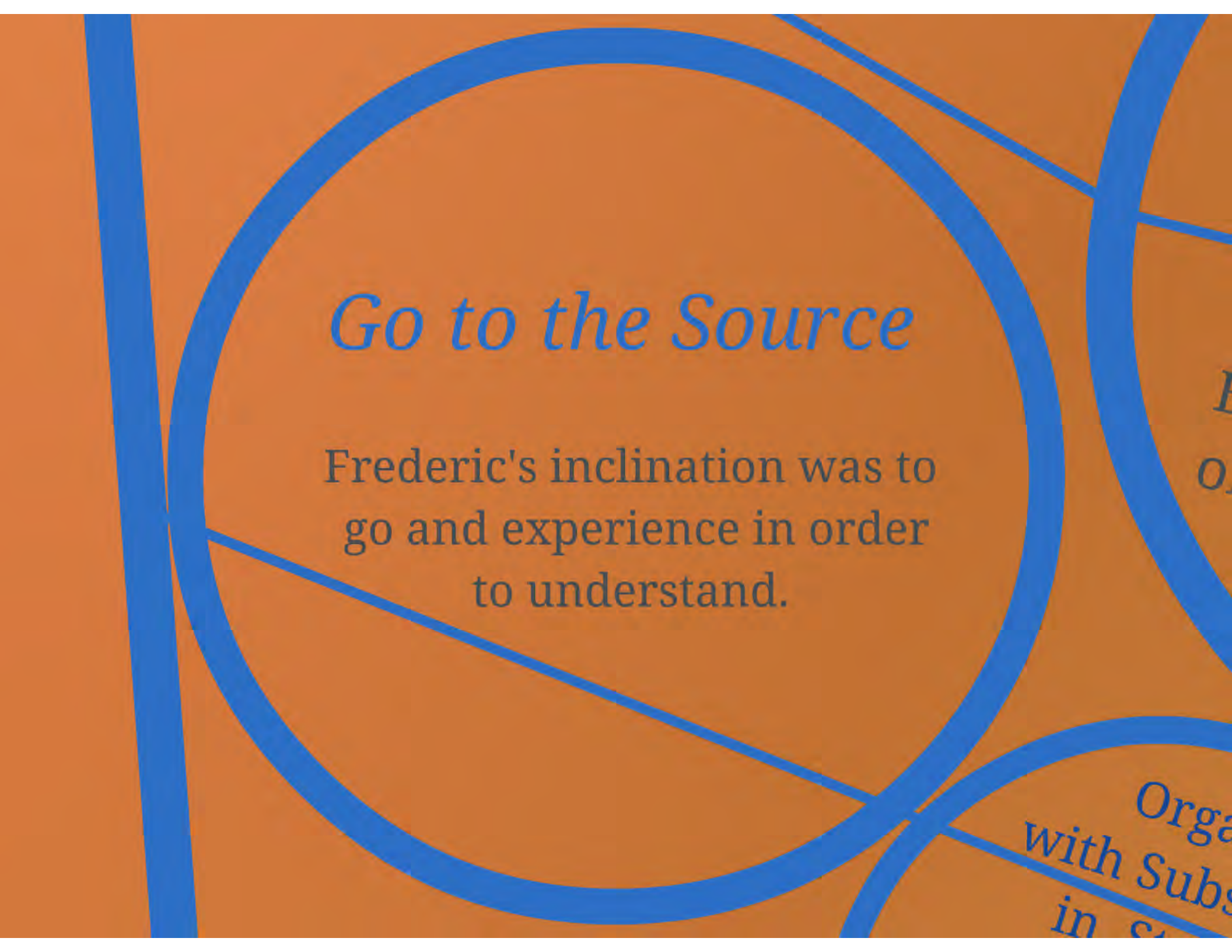


Build Relationships & Consensus

Engage in dialog & discussion
on the big issues of the day

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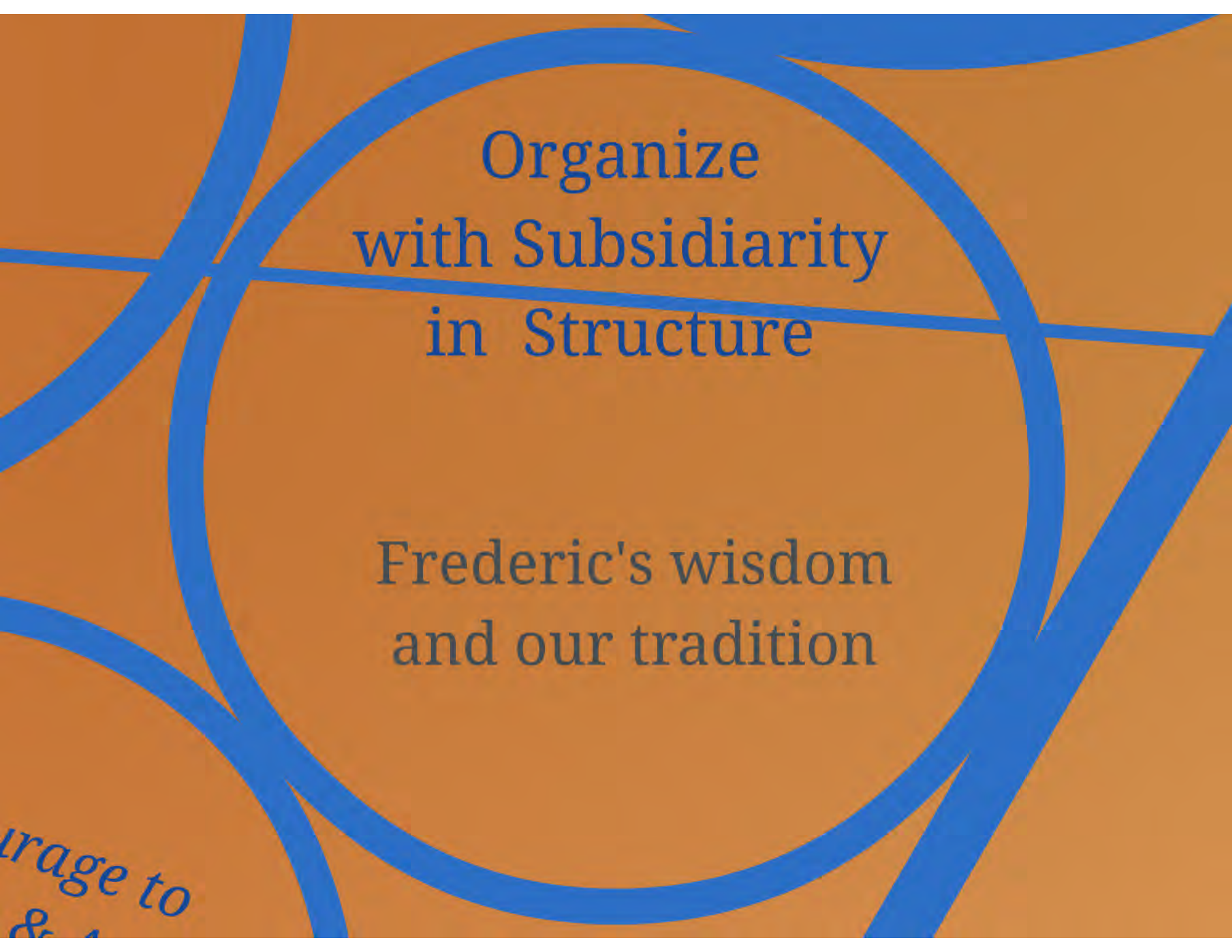
was to
order

The background is a solid orange color. Overlaid on this are several thick blue lines that form a series of overlapping circles and arcs. One large circle is centered in the upper half of the frame. Another circle is partially visible on the right side. A third circle is at the bottom right, containing some partially visible text. A straight blue line runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the center. Another straight blue line runs vertically on the left side.

Go to the Source

Frederic's inclination was to
go and experience in order
to understand.

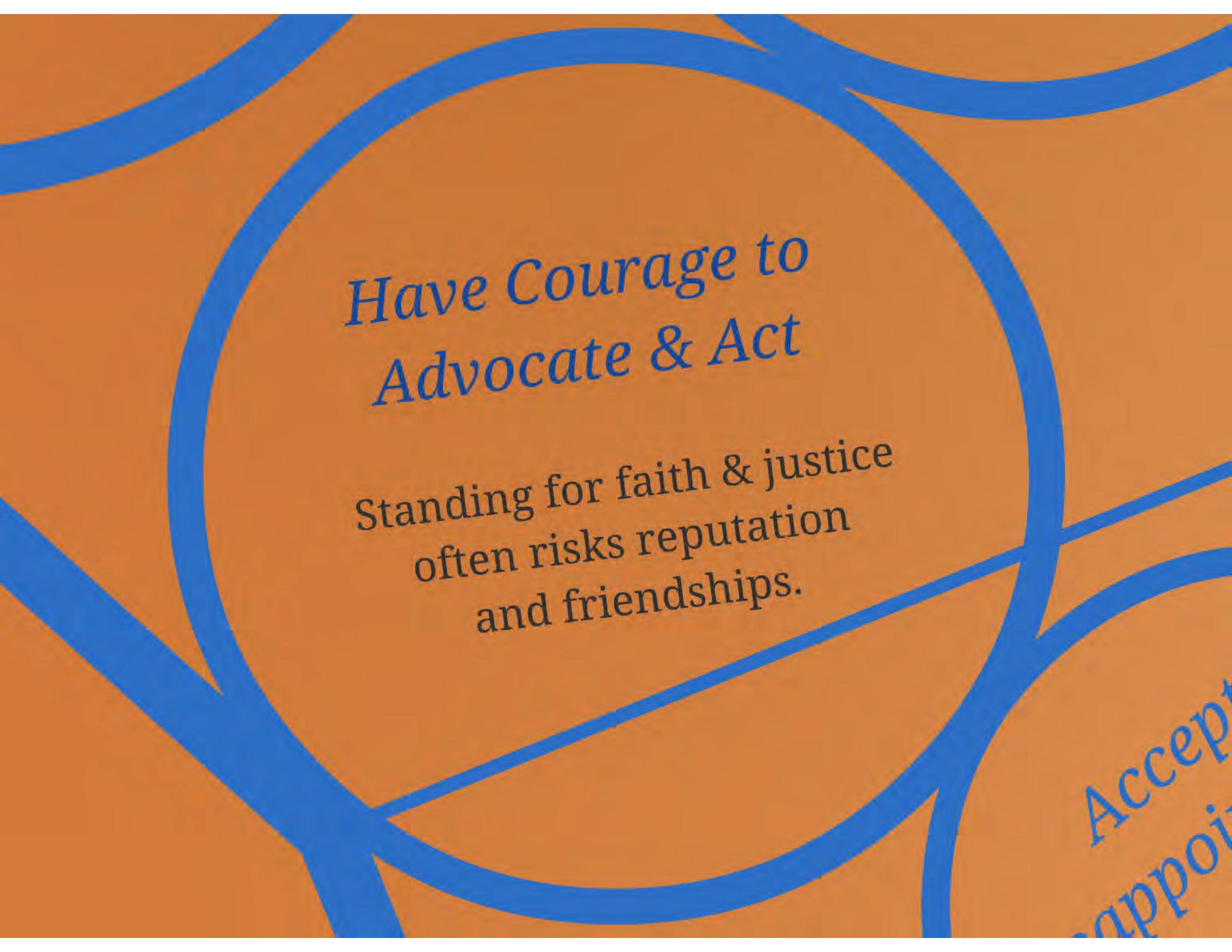
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Organize with Subsidiarity in Structure

Frederic's wisdom
and our tradition

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& a

The background consists of several overlapping orange circles of varying sizes. Overlaid on these circles are thick, solid blue lines that form a network of intersecting arcs and loops, creating a complex geometric pattern.

Have Courage to Advocate & Act

Standing for faith & justice
often risks reputation
and friendships.

Accept
appoint



Accept Disappointments

When events do not go as we planned it is essential to trust in the Providence of God.

*Build relationships
& consensus*

*Engage in dialog & discussion
on the big issues of the day*

“I have a circle of friends who gather every day in worthwhile enterprises and whom I love as brothers.... What delightful hours we have spent together speaking of country, family, religion, science, literature, legislation...”

To his mother March 19, 1833



*Build relationships
& consensus*

*Engage in dialog & discussion
on the big issues of the day*

“it is good to spy out the land
before deciding what to grow on
it....

I must speak and listen;
I must have communication and
contacts. Indeed it is impossible
for me to do passable work
without having talked about it
and discussed it with someone.”

To his mother **March 19, 1833**



Conference of History

“we meet every Saturday and there is an open field – history, philosophy, literature, everything has free play. The doors are open to all opinions and results in the liveliest discussions.” To Falconnet January 5, 1833

Salon Discussion

"Men of genius chat familiarly with the greenest scholar, conversations of all kinds...
to his mother March 19, 1833

Lunch at cafes

Bailly's newspapers



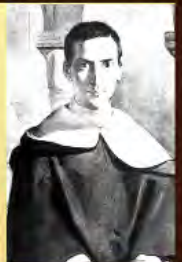
Lamennais



Chateaubriand



Montalembert



Lacordaire

“I sit alone, knowing no more disagreeable company than myself. I appreciate now by its privation the whole value of the spoken word, how much more it cultivates thought than the letters of the greatest writers. I need conversation...”

a letter to Lallier April 9, 1838



After leaving the university Ozanam & his associates were significant community leaders who stayed in contact with each other.

Frederic:

- wrote editorials & newspaper articles
- regularly corresponded
- shared annual reports
- shared his university lectures
- lectured to workmen
- attended public talks
- met community leaders



"I assure you that my impatience is not less reserved for your articles than for mine. I am awaiting F's and L's at the bottom of articles in l'Univers." to Lallier May 17, 1838



Build relationships & consensus

Engage in dialog & discussion
on the big issues of the day



Go to the Source

Frederic's inclination was to go and experience in order to understand.



“What must we do to live our Catholicism?
Let us no longer talk so much about charity.
Let us put it into practice and go to the poor.”

*You will go to visit the poor
ten times a day and ten times
a day you will find God there.*
Sr. Rosalie Rendu



I visited Saint-Etienne (near Lyon) where I saw the apparel industry in all of its most laborious works, and carried away a sad impression, considering to what toil millions of men must apply themselves to put bread between their teeth, and procure opulent well-being for a small number of the fortunate; and how the intelligence must be brutalized and the heart hardened in the midst of those machines and the immense deployment of material force.

Letter to Baily Oct. 22, 1836



Travels to the Rhine in the October of 1840

Travels to see the environment to prepare his lectures
on German literature in the Middle Ages at the Sorbonne.

"it was a case of literary
conscience" -to Lallier



Priests of France do not be offended at the freedom of speech which a layman uses in appealing to your zeal as citizens!....

The time is come when you must go and seek those who do not send for you, who hide away in the most disreputable neighborhoods, have never known the Church or a priest...

'Aux Gens de Bien',
L'Ère Nouvelle, 15 Sept. 15, 1848



Let us go to the Barbarians

“Conquer distaste and dislike and turn to democracy, to the mass of people to whom we are unknown. Appeal to them not merely by sermons but by benefits. Help them, not with alms which humiliate, but with social and helping measures, which will free and elevate them.
Let us go to the barbarians...”



from a speech to Cercle Catholique
published in le Correspondant Feb. 10, 1848



For you to consider:

*Do we have conversations about the big issues effecting society today?

*When you see things first-hand, do you process those experiences with others?

*Do you find a place in the Vincentian Family to have those discussions?

*Do we avoid discussing the large questions because that may create divisions in the organization?

*Can these conversations change us and what we do?



*Where two or three
are gathered in my
name....*



Principle of Subsidiarity

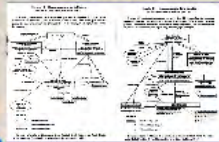
The Society embraces the Principle of Subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation. Decisions are made as close as possible to the area of activity to ensure that the local environment and circumstances (cultural, social, political, etc.) are taken into consideration. In this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils, which has been kept faithfully since the origins of the Society, enables them to help the poor spontaneously and more effectively, free from excessive bureaucracy.

Rule Part I 3.9

*No work of charity is
foreign to the work
of the Society of St.
Vincent de Paul*

(Rule Part I 1.3)

Evolution of structure



Founders return from Paris to Lyon

letters to Lallier
May 17, 1838 & August 11, 1838



Organizing the conference in Nîmes

"I think knowledge of our organization and manner of acting is not of great use to you. Your city probably has different needs than the capital and provides different resources. Providence gives its own council through the circumstances around you..."

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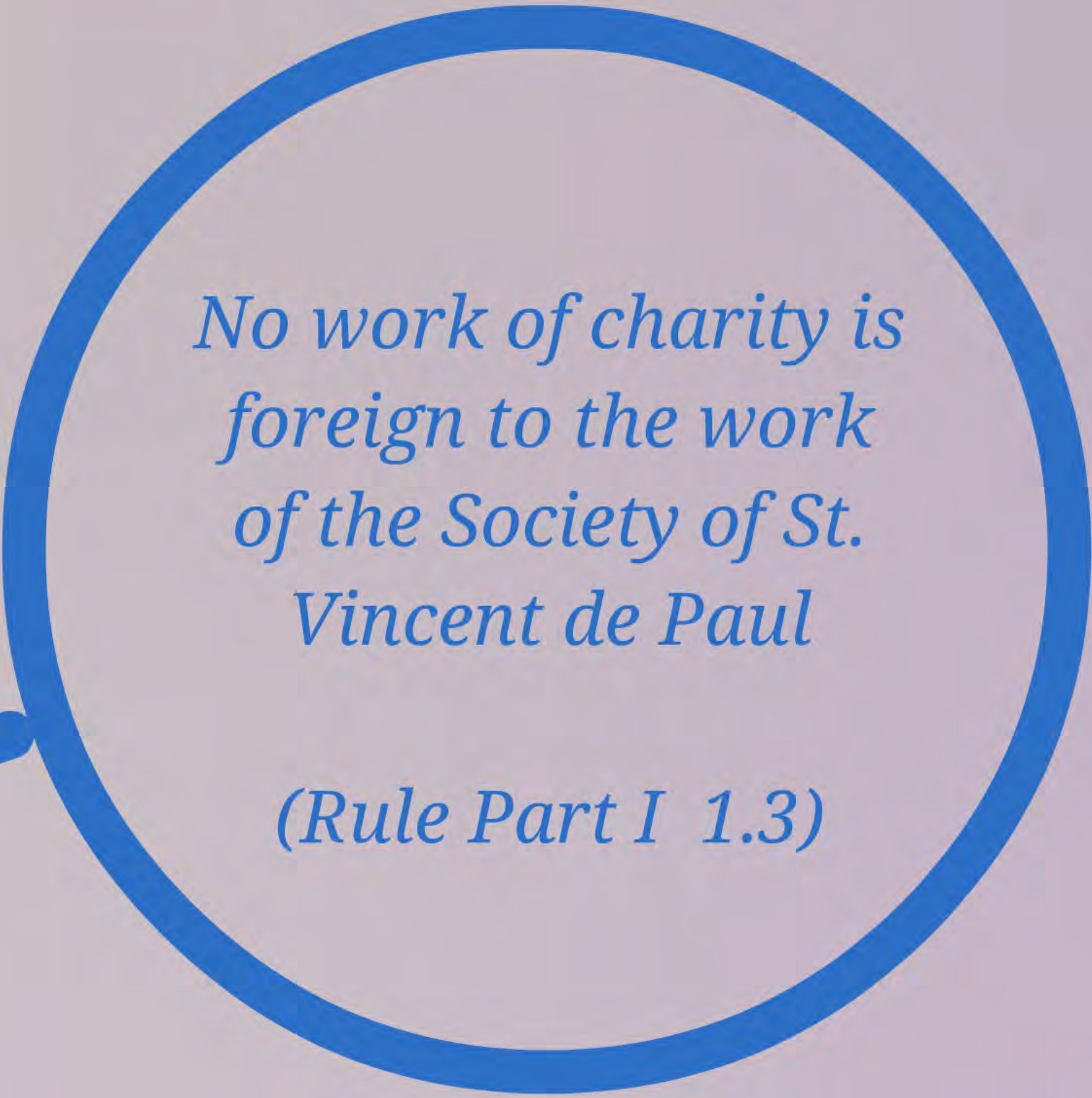
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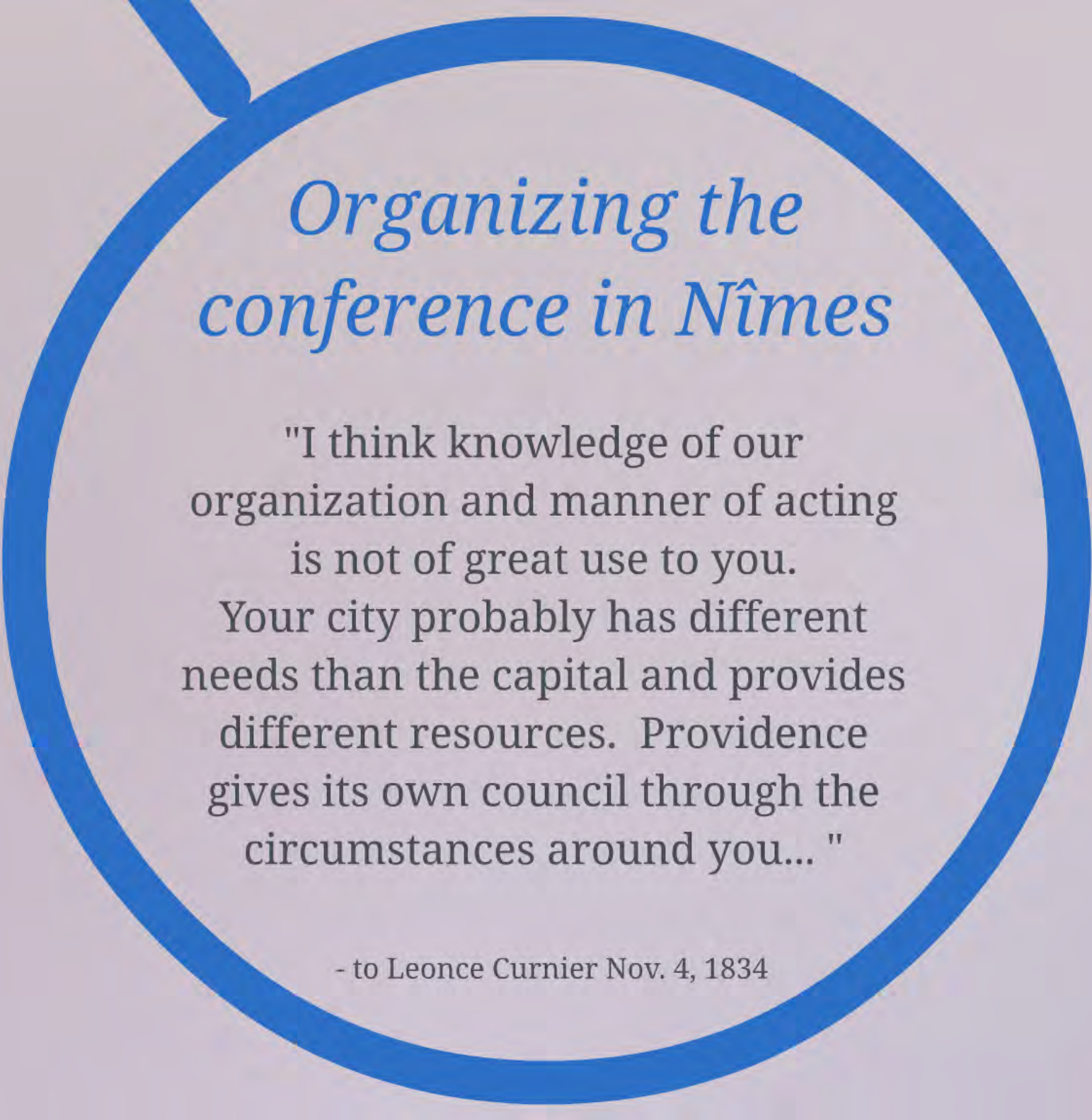
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- to Leonce Curnier Nov. 4, 1834

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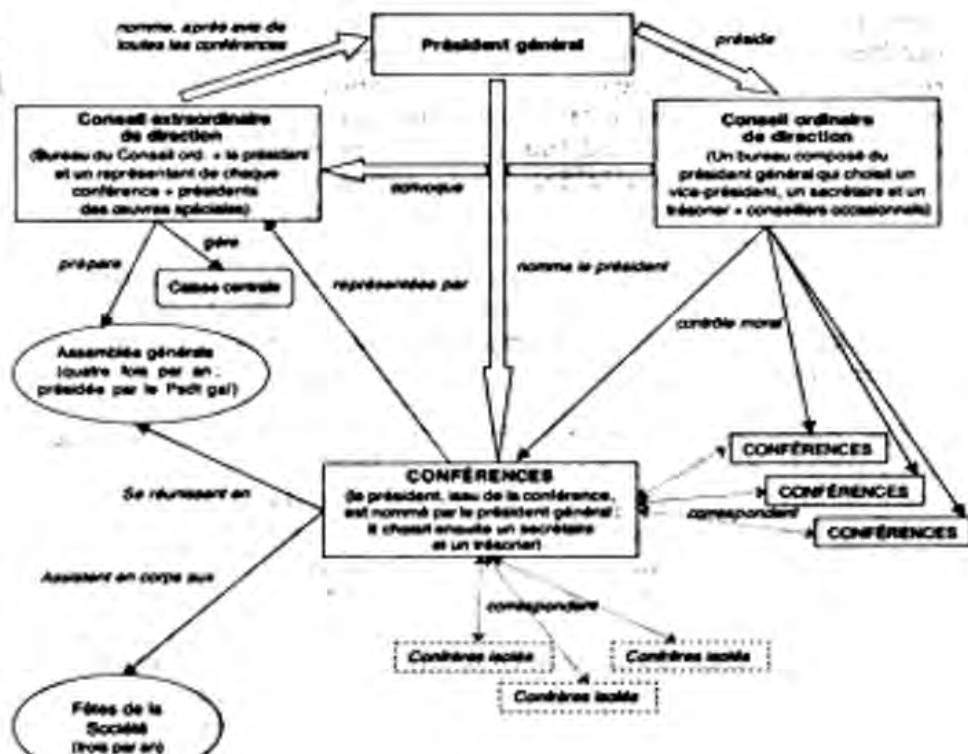
May 17, 1838 & August 11, 1838

*Lyon at the time of Ozanam.
A picture of the Tilsitt
wharf along the Saône River*



Graph. 12 – Organigramme de la Société de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (1836).

Il n'existe, au moment de la rédaction, que quatre conférences à Paris mais l'extension en province – qui a échoué à Nîmes dès 1834 mais que laissent pressentir les premiers retours d'étudiants – et à l'étranger est déjà prévue dans les statuts.



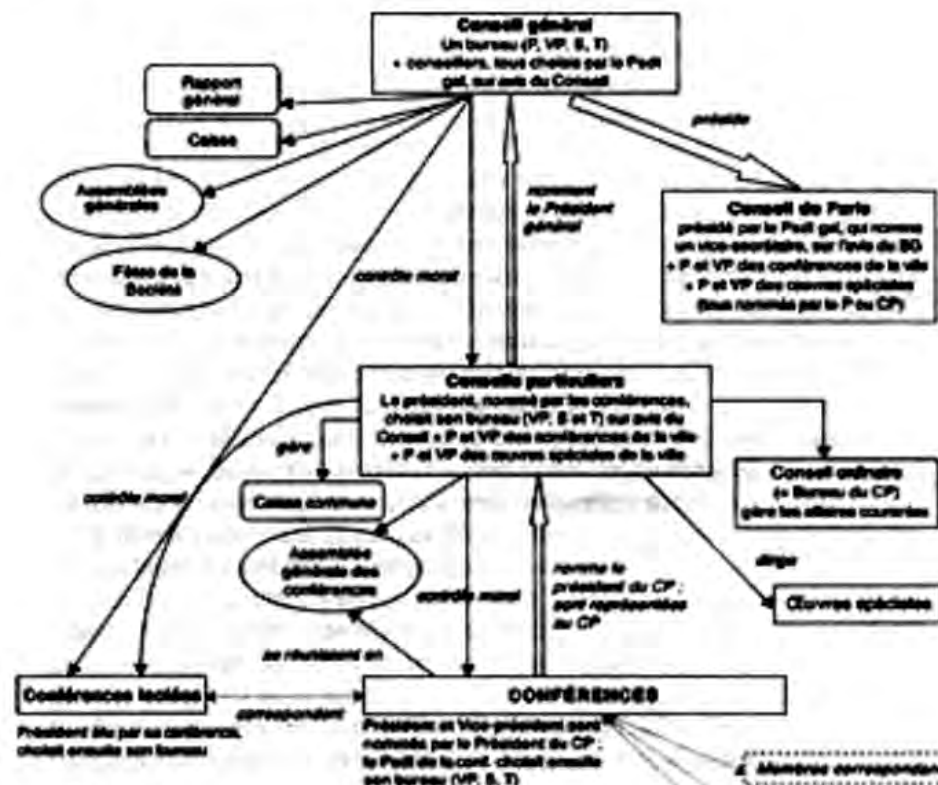
LÉGENDE

- Lien hiérarchique fort
- Lien statutaire contraignant
- Lien statutaire souple

Source : d'après le *Règlement de la Société de S. Vincent de Paul*, Paris, Imprimerie de E.-J. Bailly et Cie, place Sorbonne, 2, 1836.

Graph. 14 – Organigramme de la Société de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (1839).

Il existe 38 conférences françaises en 1839, dont 22 en province. Le nouveau règlement entérine cette situation et fournit le cadre provisoire de cette extension jusqu'à l'apparition de conseils diocésains et supra-diocésains (dits centraux) pour la France et nationaux (dits supérieurs) pour les pays étrangers.



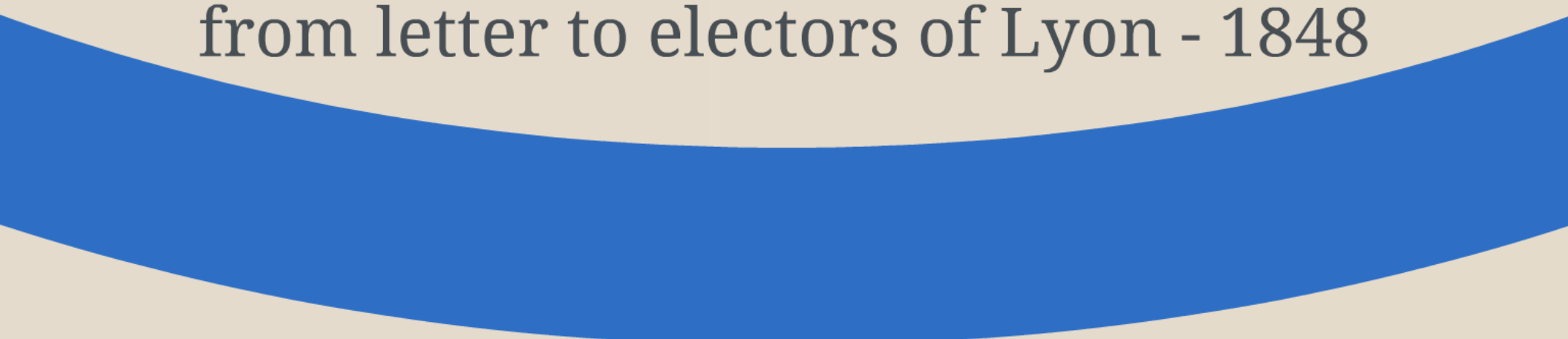
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- Lien statutaire contraignant
- Lien statutaire souple

Source : d'après le *Manuel de la Société de S. Vincent de Paul*, Paris, Au Secrétariat de la Société, 8, rue Garancière, près Saint-Sulpice, 1845.

"I reject an excessive centralization which would enlarge Paris to the detriment of the departments, the cities to the detriment of the country, and which would bring back inequality among those whom the law makes equal."

from letter to electors of Lyon - 1848



*Where two or three
are gathered in my
name....*



Principle of Subsidiarity

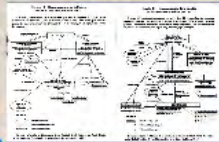
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*Have courage to
advocate & act*

Standing for justice often
risks reputation
and friendships.



“I am not a man of action;
I was born neither for the tribune nor the public squares.

If I can do anything, however little, it is in my chair;
or perhaps in the quiet of a library, where I may extract
from Christian philosophy, from the history of Christian
times, a series of ideas which I unfold to young men,
... to rally them in the midst of the confusion
of the present and the terrible
uncertainties of the future.”



Letter to Foisset March 22, 1848

I am less ready than anyone to face up to the questions which are going to be debated, I mean those questions of work, wages, industry and economy, of greater concern than any political controversy.

I scarcely know anything about even the history of modern revolutions.

Letter to Foisset March 22, 1848



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“I will support the rights to work; the independent work of the laborer, of the artisan, of the merchant who remains master of his work and salary; **the association of workers** among themselves or of workers and contractors who voluntarily join together their work and their capital.”

“I will defend the sacred principle of property. But without touching this foundation of all the civil order, one can introduce a system of **progressive tax** which would lessen the consumption taxes.

“In the Christian system, punishment does not only have the repression and atonement for crime as a goal, but also the **rehabilitation of the guilty**. All that which renders this rehabilitation more difficult and especially impossible is contrary to the ethical vows and spirit of Christianity.”

–Ozanam, Letter to citizens of Lyon
April 1848

Ozanam, Fr. Lacordaire & Fr. Maret launch L'Ere Nouvelle in April of 1848

Articles by Ozanam include:

- The Causes of Poverty*
- The Help that Honors*
- On Alms*
- The Organization of Work*
- The Origins of Socialism*
- To Decent People*



If a greater number of Christians and especially of Churchmen had concerned themselves with the workers, during the past ten years, we would be more sure of the future...

Parish priests must renounce their little bourgeois parishes, élite flocks in the middle of a huge population which they do not know.

**Frédéric his brother
abbé Alphonse Ozanam,
April 12, 1848**



**Do not be afraid when the evil rich,
wounded by your speeches,
will treat you as communists,
just as St Bernard was treated
as a fanatic and a madman.**

**'Aux Gens de Bien',
L'Ère Nouvelle,
Sept. 15, 1848**



“And yet, you who know me so well, who have received the outpourings of my heart, who have followed every step of my career, - **you are now ready, at the bidding of a newspaper, to doubt my faith!**

A layman without any authority or mission, who does not even sign his name, accuses me with betraying our cause through treason, cowardice and self-interests and even goes so far as to accuse me of apostasy. Thereupon you take alarm, and begin to fear that I no longer believe in hell. You put me in the painful position of having to bear testimony to myself.

to Dufieux July 14, 1850

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The Socialists are also critical:

"and it is being said 'What can you accomplish in the company of men who know how to comfort misery, but who do not know how to prevent it?

Will you not prefer to have a part in those greater associations that strive to tear up the whole evil from its roots, to regenerate the world, to restore the disinherited ?'"



"That language is not new. The Saint Simonians and others addressed it to us fifteen years ago, when we founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul....

But when we contrast what we have accomplished in cooperation with those men, with the needs we have helped, the tears we have dried, ...of crimes perhaps prevented and the anger which we have softened, we do not regret the choice God inspired us to make."

'Les Origines du Socialisme',
Ère Nouvelle September 11, 1848



“let no one say that... we aim to perpetuate it (poverty): the same authority which tells us that we shall always have the poor amongst us, is the one that commands us to do all we can so that there are no more poor.”

The Alms in L'Ere Nouvelle
December, 24 1848



Accept disappointments

When events do not go as we
planned it is essential to trust
in the Providence of God.

Bishop Affre killed June 27, 1848



Rioters storm assembly in June 1848

Louis-Napoleon (Napoleon III) elected president.

April 1849 last issue of l'Ere Nouvelle

“I cannot associate with those who condemn so bitterly the present age; this is another way of condemning Providence.”

-Ozanam 1848



*Writing to his mother-in-law
on the eve of Easter 1849*

*“When the head is worn out with work,
and the heart is by controversy and disappointment,
one leaves the petty rivalry of men
and contact with wicked passions
to aspire to the peace of these
holy days.”*







The “long view” of God’s Providence

*"I believe in its progress throughout Christian times.
I do not fear the falls and the gaps which may interrupt it..."*

*For this reason, then, I thank God for those stormy years,...
I have entered upon a course of study in which I have found security.
I learn not to despair of my own century by returning to more
threatening epochs, and beholding the perils which have been
traversed by that Christian society of which we are the disciples,
we know how to act as champions.
I do not close my eyes to the storms of the present day;
I know that I myself may perish therein..."*

Author's Preface to "Civilization in the 5th Century"
Frederic Ozanam, 1850

For you to consider:

- *How do we discern when discussions should move to action and what actions to take?
- *What are the challenges involved when we organize efforts with decision making at the lowest level?
- *Do we find and bring the presence of God into our projects of systemic change?
- *How do you keep the “long view” of God’s Providence when efforts don’t succeed?



"To relate the life of a saint and therefore promote his memory has a moral goal.

The content of the life of the saint depends on the values that a religious group wants to promote, those that it deems most necessary to its era.

The virtues are more or less differently organized depending on the necessities of the times..."



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