



Who Will Carry Firewood Today?

"In my life I want to become better and do a little good..."

Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Prepared by Sr Melissa Dwyer FdCC

In 1833 when Frederic Ozanam gathered in Paris with his friends in an attempt to show the relevance of the Catholic faith, he was inspired to simply 'do a little good'. Who would have thought that the small gesture of collecting remaining firewood and delivering it to a widow would have been the birth of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Who would have thought that the criticism of the irrelevance of the Catholic faith would have led to nearly 200 years of tangible witnessing to the compassionate and liberating love of Christ. Who would have thought that a 20 year old man could ignite a fire in so many others who found meaning in reaching out to those less fortunate. The desire to 'do a little good' spread like a fire and embraced many in that same mission of humble service. His passion for service, and his willingness to live his faith in action, have been entrusted to those of us today who have the same mission to carry firewood.

The desire to simply, 'do a little good' continues to inspire Vincentians, volunteers, associate members and staff who live out the dream of Ozanam by carrying firewood in a variety of ways.

During this past year, all those affiliated with the Society have carried wood in a variety of ways. We have carried firewood every time we visited families and listened to their needs; we have carried firewood whenever we served people in a Vinnies shop; we have carried firewood when we advocated for the rights of those who were being discriminated against; we have carried firewood when we have helped people with no interest loans or when we have met as a conference to share our stories of service; we carry firewood when we take children on a buddies day; we carry firewood when we work behind the scenes in so many different ways to facilitate the process so that others can meet the poor face to face. Yes, today there are still great needs in our local communities. And yes, today we still carry firewood in the footsteps of Frederic Ozanam.

Without a doubt, Frederic Ozanam was a man with a mission. His desire to 'become better and do a little good' lives on today in the hearts of thousands of men and women who carry on this same mission. Whilst the appearance of the firewood has changed, the same passion to help others, that same passion to live our faith in action, that same passion to love God with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms, lives on.

As we carry firewood into the future, we are not sure of the emerging poverties that await us. We are not sure of the nature of how we might be called upon to carry firewood. Yet what we do know, is that there will always be a need for men and women, young and old, to share the mission of Frederic Ozanam. The need to live our Catholic faith through tangible gestures of love in action will always be necessary. Thus, the St Vincent de Paul Society will always need new hands and new hearts willing to take up the firewood and bring it to the poor.

Let us pray for renewed energy in our spirit of service. Let us pray for the same passion of Frederic Ozanam who was tireless in his self-sacrifice. Let us pray for listening hearts to truly discern those who are in greatest need in our local communities. And let us pray for all those who help us to carry firewood, for as we carry on the mission of Ozanam, we stand on the shoulders of all of those Vincentians who have gone before us in their humble quest to become better, and do a little good.