

Activity: A story of Action

Source: SVP (2014) Young SVP Education Resource Pack. Dublin. Page 9

Twenty year old student and thinker, Frederic Ozanam, and a few friends started the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) in Paris on 23rd April 1833 at a time of great crisis in France. This group of people decided to put their Christian faith into action by reaching out to those society overlooked. They wanted to affirm the dignity of every person, so that those in greatest need be cared for, their conditions improved and the causes of poverty addressed. Their motivation in all of this was to see and serve Christ in the people of their time.

It is a tribute to youth and a remarkable example which can be followed by young people today. Well aware of the very difficult political, social and economic problems of their times these young men, did not waste time or energy, but instead committed themselves to an active, moral and material service to the most deprived. Favouring a practical, direct approach to dealing with poverty by their own efforts and raising what finance they could, they worked to alleviate the sufferings and poverty of others. Frederic Ozanam and his friends believed that Christian help and friendship were the best means of achieving social justice. As the SSVP developed the members chose St Vincent de Paul (who lived from 1581-1660 in France) to be their Patron. They chose St Vincent because St Vincent dedicated himself to God through caring for all those who were suffering from the effects of poverty and hardship. He believed that to serve the poorest is to serve Jesus who said:

“What you do to the weakest of my brothers and sisters, you do to me.”

The members of SSVP continue to live the vision of Blessed Frederic Ozanam and to follow the inspiration of St Vincent de Paul. Their work is practical and makes a real difference today as it has done for generations. Young people continue to volunteer their time, energy and creativity to find new ways to put faith in God into action for people in need, and so, to make a real and lasting difference in our society.

- Split the group into smaller groups.
- Ask the groups to think about the ‘story of action’ and ask them to make it more relevant to the 21st Century.
- Ask the groups to recreate the story using an issue or problem that they have identified that exists in Scotland today e.g. homelessness
- Each group could create a poster, a song, a drama sketch, a comic strip (or any other creative method) to tell their more modern day story.
- Their story must address not only the responses to the issues, but also look at the causes of the issues and how the issues may be addressed.