



# The Top Hat

The Vincentian Voice of  
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul

*Archdiocesan Council of New Orleans*

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Volume 2 Issue 10

April 2010

## SVdP Celebrates the Birthday of Blessed Antoine Frédéric Ozanam



**Antoine Frédéric Ozanam**, born April 23, 1813 was French scholar. He founded with fellow students the Conference of Charity-now known to us as The Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In 1997, he was beatified by Pope John Paul II in the church Notre Dame de Paris, hence he may be properly called Blessed **Frédéric** by Catholics. Throughout his life, Ozanam's simple hope was to "become better--to do a little good." After the deaths of his mother and father, Frederic considered seriously a vocation as a priest. In 1840, he abandoned a legal career and became a professor of literature at the Sorbonne. Though he immediately linked his life of studies to his life of charity, he did not do so as a priest. In 1841, Ozanam married Emelie Saulacroix and the two devoted themselves to the task of reconciling married life to a life of good works. By 1852, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul would boast 2000 conferences, 500 of which were not in France.

Ozanam leaves a lasting legacy to all of us. His dedication to social reform and Christian social justice continues to moves us deeply. His integration of his professional and spiritual life continues to challenges us daily. His example of simple and open leadership continues to guide us effectively. His belief in the relevancy of the Christian message to modern life continues to inspire us constantly. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul continues his active work of Christian charity, precisely because his legacy is lasting.

### THE TOP HAT....

Is a publication for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and it's designed to inform its communities of past, present and future services and events. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic lay organization that offers service to the needy in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and its patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

## Fire at Marrero Thrift Store

The SVdP thrift store that served Westbank residents caught fire on March 28th. Unfortunately, very little was salvageable.

The building will be destroyed and plans to rebuild are uncertain at this time.



**From the Board....**  
*Submitted by Elaine Selle*

Highlights from the SVdP Board monthly meeting held on March 31, 2010:

- The New Orleans Hornets Basketball team partnered with the board for SVdP Night at their March 1st game against the San Antonio Spurs. We sold over 100 tickets, and received over \$500 from the Hornets.
- On Wednesday, April 14th, Ozanam Inn set up a booth in Lafayette Square at the request of the Young Leadership Council that sponsors ‘Wednesdays in the Park’. The Inn distributed information to increase public awareness of all its good work.
- On a very sad note, the SVdP Thrift Store, located in Marrero, caught fire on March 28th. Unfortunately, it was a total loss. Since it re-opened in May 2009, this community-supported store successfully served SVdP clients on the WestBank.
- Conferences are encouraged to purchase ads for the SVdP Program publication for the National Meeting to be held at the Sheraton Hotel Downtown, from September 9-11th. A “value added” offer is being extended to Conferences who buy a \$500 ad, entitling that Conference to four passes to attend the daily meetings and workshops, free of charge.
- Please sign up to help us with our National Meeting. Contact Volunteer Co-Chairs, Karen Haydel @ 504-834-4471 and Margaret and Dan Picou @ 985-792-7462.
- National SVdP has set the date of September 25th for our third annual Friends of the Poor Walk that will be held on the North Shore on the Lake Front in Mandeville. Anyone interested in volunteering can contact Elaine Selle, President of the St. Tammany-Washington District at 504-382-4041 or [eselle@weiss-eason.com](mailto:eselle@weiss-eason.com).
- ACC has offered their counseling hot line to SVdP clients. The Care Line is 1-866-891-2210. Lynn Schraeberg is the Director of Counseling.

**Quarterly Meetings:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • <b>St. Tammany-Washington District</b> | <b>Held on April 25th</b>   |
| • <b>Downtown District</b>               | <b>Held on March 27th</b>   |
| • <b>East Jefferson District</b>         | <b>Held on April 13th</b>   |
| • <b>Mid-City/University</b>             | <b>Held on April 18th</b>   |
| • <b>Gentilly/Lakeview District</b>      | <b>Held on April 12th</b>   |
| • <b>WestBank District</b>               | <b>May 13th at Our Lady of Prompt Succor in Westwego<br/>(at 6:30 p.m.)</b> |

**WANTED: volunteers for the upcoming SVdP Annual Meeting**  
**SVdP is now soliciting volunteers for the September Annual Meeting!!**

- Two people on Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 to rotate stock at our food bank and take extra cans to a designated conference (about 2 hours per week).
- Two persons to interview needy clients at the Parish Center between 9:00 to 10:30 a.m.. These interviews are by appointment only (about 1 1/2 hours per week).
- One or two people to maintain our files, update them once a week, discard old files and correct errors (about 2 hours per week anytime during the week).

For more information, contact Karen Haydel at 504-834-4471 or [khay315@gmail.com](mailto:khay315@gmail.com) or Margaret and Dan Picou at 504-220-6638 or [jproulx@lpwsl.com](mailto:jproulx@lpwsl.com).

### Local Conference News- From Ozanam Inn

Ozanam Inn was featured in the annual ***“Best Places to Work”*** upcoming edition of City Business. Ozanam Inn would like to express special thanks to photographer Frank

Aymami, a noted local professional for donating his time and talents. Aymami also took a variety of photos that will be used in a promotional brochure that is being developed

And can be found on the organizations’ website and will be used for future publications. The photographs will feature good work being done at the Inn, such as-

\*Counseling efforts

\*Neighborhood clean-up efforts

\*The Ozanam Inn Library

\*The Chapel

\*Crew members training fellow crew members in the front office

\*Volunteer efforts from President Claiborne Perrilliat and the kitchen crew.

The Inn believes these promotional efforts will build awareness within the New Orleans area and show the various ways Ozanam Inn serves those and need; which includes rehabilitation to those who wish to become contributing members of the community.



After twenty years serving as housekeeping manager, front office manager and night manager, Louis Harris has retired, to spend time with his wife and family. Mr. Harris knew the mission and operations of the Inn like few others. He mentored many of the current staff and patiently allowed staff to learn from their mistakes as well as our achievements. The true beneficiaries of his dedication and kindness of are the men who spent the night at the Inn and have been served in so many other ways over the past twenty years.

On March 29th, Deacon G and Clarence Adams hosted a lunch in Mr. Harris’ honor.

On behalf of the staff and volunteers of Ozanam Inn, Mr. Harris was presented with a crystal memento monetary gift. The ‘icing’ of the event was a cake; that was decorated with the meaningful words: **THANK YOU MR. HARRIS!  
WE WILL MISS YOU!**

### Local Conference News- From Blessed Sacrament-St. Joan of Arc Conference

Blessed Sacrament-St. Joan of Arc conference elected the following officers on March 7, 2010:

Sonya Stinson	President
Barbara Jones	Vice President
A.J. Licata	Treasurer
Marguerite Stepter	Co-Treasurer
Audrey Price	Secretary
Mary Harris	Chaplain

*“The Order of society is based on two virtues: justice and charity. However, justice presupposes a lot of love already, for one needs to love a man a great deal to respect his rights, which limit his rights, and his liberty, which hampers our liberty. Justice has its limits whereas charity knows none.”*

*-Blessed Frederic Ozanam*

## Sixteen Essential Practices That Help Conferences Remain Faithful to the **RULE OF THE SOCIETY.**

1. A Meeting of all active members of the conference should be held frequently. **Weekly is the ideal.** New conferences are expected to meet at least twice each month, according to the International Rule.
2. The members should pray together and have a spiritual reading during the first twenty minutes of the meeting. This is usually prepared by the conference's Spiritual Advisor who may or may not be a priest or deacon. **"Meetings are to be held in a spirit of friendship, simplicity and Christian joy."** Regular spiritual development is important. Every conference needs a committed spiritual advisor.
2. A written treasurer's financial report should be made to the members present at each meeting or at least on a regular basis (quarterly). There should be two signatories on each account, although having two signatures on every check is not always necessary. A pastor or priest may not be a signatory on the SVdP account. In fact, the SVdP account should be separate from both the treasurer's personal funds and from parish accounts. **"The Treasurer keeps the accounts which should be audited at least once a year by two members delegated by the conference or by a qualified person or organization."**
3. Each member of the conference should report about the specific cases to which he/she was assigned. Each conference, **"because of its Vincentian commitment, engages regularly in the person-to-person service of those in need."**
5. All decisions on future policies and practices should be group decisions. The president has only one vote as any member.
6. Minutes of each meeting should be taken and then distributed at, or preferably before, the next meeting.
7. A regular meeting date, time, and place should be established and not discourage future membership.
8. Complete, accurate, confidential records of every person helped should be kept in a safe, location, updated regularly, and made available to the active members.
9. Regular updates should be given to parishioners about the general kinds of help that have been administered and any special projects planned in the future.
10. Conferences should prepare and maintain a complete list of local resources and contact people in order to aid all conference members in handling their cases effectively.
11. Conferences should establish regular procedures on how calls for aid will be handled and in what order such calls will be investigated by the members of the conference. It is especially important to have a weekend plan that is clearly understood and approved by the members and the pastor. It is also important to have a plan to follow up with people who have been visited by the conference.
12. **Generally, no money is to be given to a person who is helped.** All necessary payments, such as rent, utilities, etc., are to be made directly by the conference. A conference can decide to give money to a person in need in certain extraordinary circumstances, but should always be careful when doing so. **No donations are to be made to other organizations,** unless it is specifically to help in the aid of a particular person in need. For example, the SVdP does contribute to Food Banks in which we participate, but the SVdP does not take a portion of its funds to donate to the missions. The SVdP has a regular twinning process with needy conferences in foreign countries (and domestically), if any conference desires to do so.

*Continued on page 5*

*Sixteen Essential Practices That Help Conferences Remain Faithful to the  
RULE OF THE SOCIETY. (cont)*

13. Regular solicitation of new members is necessary and a plan for such should be developed. There are three levels of membership: active (executive), associate, and contributing (benefactor).
- Active (Executive):** Members who meet regularly and who actively deal with the needs of the poor. They generally receive no payment for their services.
- Associate:** Members who have a special interest in the work of the society and who may help in a particular way such as moving furniture, repairing, financial advice, driving the elderly, etc. They do not generally attend regular meetings, but should be invited to special celebrations or meetings.
- Contributing: (Benefactor)** Members who wish to make some kind of regular monetary commitment to the society for its work. They do not generally attend regular meetings, but should be invited to special celebrations or meetings.
14. Every conference should be composed of at least five members, and should have a separate President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer (**The Board**) and Spiritual Advisor. No President should be in office longer than six consecutive years. However, the term of office for President is three years and an election by secret ballot generally organized by the vice-president must be held every three years. No priest or deacon can be an officer of the conference, although priests and deacons can be active members as well as Spiritual Advisors. Interestingly, nuns are considered a part of the laity by the Church and can be active voting members and hold office.
15. Every conference also has an obligation to pay "Solidarity" dues in a timely manner. Every conference has an obligation to support and to participate in the activities of upper councils. Although the conference president must attend district council meetings, all members of conferences are encouraged to attend district meetings. Collaboration and communication among councils and conferences is essential to the health of the Society.
16. Be alert to the following issues of accountability:
1. Does the treasurer provide a written financial report to the members present at each meeting or at least on a regular basis (quarterly)?
  2. Are there two signatories on each account? (Two signatures on every check, however, are not always necessary)
  3. Does the conference have an appropriate EIN number needed for bank accounts?
  4. Are complete, accurate, confidential records of those helped kept, updated regularly, placed in a safe, central location, and made available to the active members of the conference?
  5. Has a complete list of local resources and contact people to aid in cases been prepared and maintained by the conference?
  6. Has the conference explored the need for insurance coverage? (The Diocesan Council covers all conferences under its jurisdiction)
  7. Does the conference conduct appropriate and timely audits?
  8. Is there a need to file a form 990 with the IRS?

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***2010 SVdP Annual National Convention Meeting Update***  
***MARK YOUR CALENDAR***  
***-by Sandy Norman***

Planning for the 2010 Annual National Meeting has picked up considerably. We are pleased to report progress related to our need for handicap transportation from the Sheraton Hotel to Immaculate Conception Church on Saturday, September 11th for the closing Mass. Transportation Committee Chair, Jim Kenny, has tentative arrangements with the RTA to provide handicap bus service.

Online registration will open this month and will be available on the following website: *www.svdpusa/net.meeting*. If you would like a hard copy, please contact Sr. Juanita Chenevert, our Registration Committee Chairperson at 504-862-5693 or 504-615-4533 or *sjchenevert@yahoo.com*. The Registration Committee Co- Chair, Kathy Crosskill, may also be contacted at 504-738-6808 or *krosskill@aol.com*.

We encourage everyone to support this prestigious national meeting, either as an individual or collectively as a Conference. Your support can take form of an ad in the Meeting Program, a personal or Conference donation and/or as a volunteer. Conferences are reminded to take advantage of the "value-added" opportunity to receive 4 passes to meetings and workshops for a \$500 donation. If you are interested in placing an ad, contact Curtis Jacob, at 504-554-8875 or *c\_jacob@bellsouth.net*. To sign up as a volunteer, contact Karen Haydel at 504-834-4471 or *khay315@gmail.com* or Margaret and Dan Picou at 504-220-6638 or *jpickou@pwsf.com*.

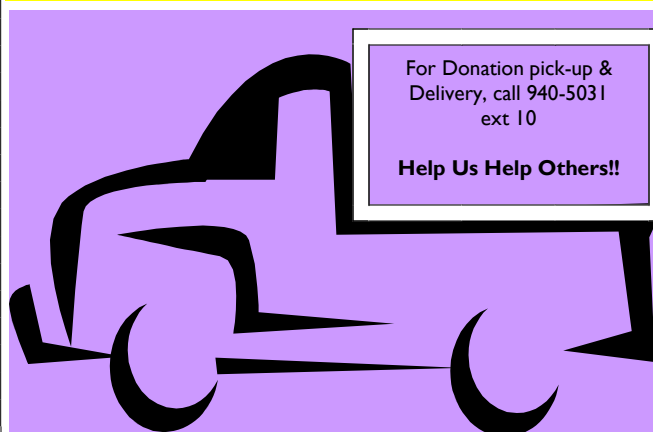
Of note on the program, there is a session on Friday and repeated on Saturday, which would benefit all Conferences and Districts titled "3 R's for Conference Spiritual Advisors". This program, presented by Sr. Joan Pytlik, will be an orientation to the Role, Responsibilities and Resources for SVdP Spiritual Advisors who foster shared fraternal spirituality at SVdP meetings.

If you have ever wondered about the inside workings of the Society, plan to sit in on a National Conference Meeting, Regional meeting or the National Business meeting. You will be surprised at what you will learn and impressed with the dedication and fervor of our volunteer leaders, within whom the spirit of Vincent, Louise and Federic truly burns. We encourage you to make plans now and register early to attend this important Vincentian event. You will be refreshed and reinvigorated to go forth and live your mission as a Vincentian following Christ through service to those in need.

**SVdP**  
**Condolences..**

To our Adult Learning Center Family as they grieve the loss of June Gorden, who died April 2, 2010. Gorden, was 18 years old and was a promising ALC student.

Gorden leaves to cherish his memory, loving parents, siblings, relatives and friends in the New Orleans area, Boutte and Luling, LA, as well as Laurel MS, Houston, Austin and Denton, TX.



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