



Antoine Frédéric Ozanam

Raymond L. Sickinger

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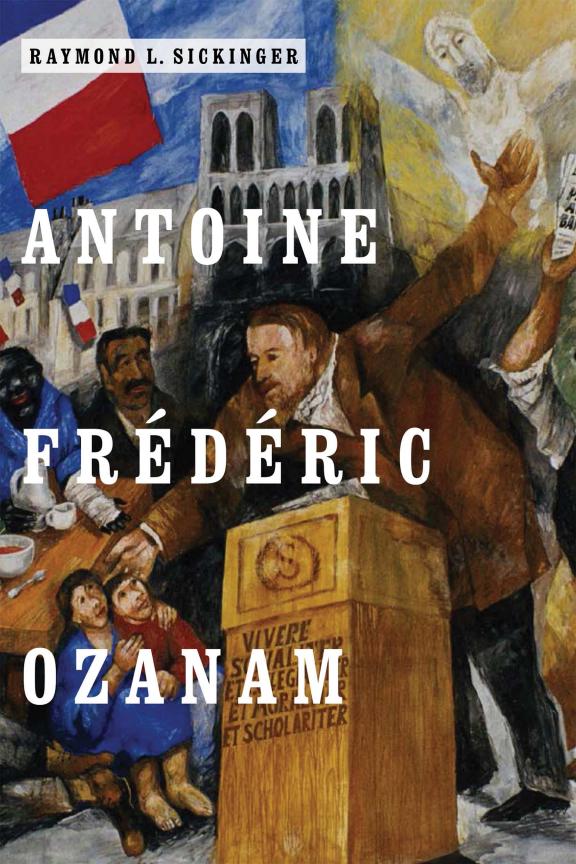
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ANTOINE FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM

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RAYMOND L. SICKINGER

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents,

Gerhard and Cecile Sickinger, whose deep love for one another,

for family, for friends, and for all people

is a constant source of inspiration and strength.

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PREFACE

The mural shown on the cover of this book, painted by Sieger Köder, illustrates the lifelong commitment of Antoine Frédéric Ozanam to serving the needs of those in poverty. Köder attempted to depict Ozanam's awareness that the Catholic Church of his day had failed to protect or secure the rights and dignity of the poor and marginalized. The dark windows of Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral in the painting evoke this failure. Lacking the support of the Church, many desperate people had turned away from religion and found refuge in ideologies such as socialism. At the center of the painting, in a busy street among poor and working-class citizens of Paris, is Ozanam, speaking from his Sorbonne podium. The collegiate motto of the Sorbonne is emblazoned on the podium: *vivere socialiter, et collegialiter, et moraliter, et scholariter* (to live as a member of society, a colleague, a moral being, and a scholar).

Ozanam believed that the Gospels contained the true principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity that had been promised in the French Revolution. In both his teachings and his writings he called on the Catholic Church to embrace the worker class—a class often thought of as a new wave of barbarians in civilized society. Although Ozanam stands behind his podium in Köder's mural, his hands and body extend outward in solidarity with those in need. He put his words into practice. In the background of the mural is Christ, filled with compassion for those who suffer. Father Köder's painting captures Ozanam and his times and offers some insight into the reasons why Ozanam founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

1. For details on the German priest and painter Sieger Köder (1925–2015), see an obituary by Gemma Simmonds, "Sieger Köder RIP," *Independent Catholic News*, February 11, 2015. http://www.indcatholicnews.com/. For another treatment of his mural on Ozanam and more information on Köder, see http://vinformation.famvin.org/prayers-reflections-novenas/frederic-ozanam-mural-tribute-to-german-priest-painter-sieger-koder/.

I remember the first time I heard of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. I was a teenager who had just lost his grandfather. To me, he was simply "pépère," a wonderful French Canadian patriarch whose family was the most important thing in his life. As the family greeted the numerous guests who attended his wake, it quickly became apparent that many of them had been helped by the Society, and especially by my pépère, who had been a member most of his life. The stories that I heard about him and the Society intrigued me, and when I was invited some years later to an information night about the Society, I attended. At that meeting I first heard the name of Antoine Frédéric Ozanam, the principal founder of the Society. As a young university professor, I was inspired by the example of Ozanam. I was drawn to him as a moth to a flame. From that moment, it was as if he and I became friends. It has been a friendship developed over more than twenty-five years. Although Ozanam would be the first to admit his weaknesses, he was determined to overcome them. His overriding desire was to anticipate and to help fulfill the will of God in his life. Ozanam understood that the road to sanctification is one that is neither straight nor smooth. But it is a road worth traveling if one wishes to "lead a better life." For Ozanam, "to live better and to do a little good" was not only an aspiration but a vision for a better world.

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I am deeply grateful for all the assistance I have received, enabling me to complete this manuscript. First, I thank DePaul University's Vincentian Studies Institute for a generous research grant of \$15,000 to support my work. In particular, I thank Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., Senior Executive for University Mission at DePaul, and Nathan Michaud, director of Publications at the Vincentian Studies Institute, for their support and advice both before and after receiving the grant. Their kindness is genuinely appreciated. I am also thankful for their willingness to allow me to reuse material from articles I had written for the journal *Vincentian Heritage*.

I thank Providence College for a sabbatical leave, which gave me the necessary time to finish my research, and for its support of my research with a generous Committee on Aid to Faculty Research grant. This grant not only allowed me to purchase some of Ozanam's letters but also enabled me to travel to Paris for my research. In particular, I thank Kris A. Monahan, director of Sponsored Research and Programs at Providence College, whose help in applying for a research grant from DePaul and in administering the funds once it was awarded was invaluable.

I am deeply grateful to the University of Notre Dame Press for agreeing to publish my manuscript and for its ongoing support and guidance in preparing the work for publication.

I am also deeply grateful to the staff of the International Office of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris, France. Their kindness and hospitality to me and to my wife were extraordinary. They were instrumental in locating certain necessary documents. I appreciate their willingness to allow me to use photographs that I took in the museum Souvenir Ozanam. In particular, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Amin de Tarrazi of the Paris Council and former international president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. A wonderful person and a genuine Vincentian,

Monsieur Tarrazi graciously guided me through the museum, where I spent several hours looking at artifacts of Ozanam's life.

I thank the Association of the Miraculous Medal (www.amm.org) for permission to include an image of a painting of Ozanam that was produced for the association by artist Gary Schumer. I am equally thankful for permission from St. Vincent's Parish in Graz, Austria, to use the mural of Ozanam by Sieger Köder as a cover image.

I thank both Sister Kieran Kneaves, Daughters of Charity, and Ralph Middlecamp, executive director of the Council of Madison, Wisconsin, for leading an informative and inspiring Vincentian Heritage tour of Paris, which acquainted me with the most important sites for Ozanam's life and gave me a better understanding of the Paris of Ozanam's milieu. I also thank Ralph Middlecamp for sharing with me some of his own original research, as well as artwork and photographs of Ozanam and his times. His insights were extremely helpful.

I recognize and thank Gene Smith, former national president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States. He was the first to suggest that I write a biography of Ozanam, and he constantly encouraged me to do so.

Last and most of all, I deeply acknowledge my dear wife, Patricia Sickinger, for her patience, understanding, and loving support, without which this manuscript would never have been possible. She has been, and continues to be, my own "Amélie Soulacroix."

Introduction

When Antoine Frédéric Ozanam was born in the spring of 1813, France was still ostensibly the most powerful nation on the continent of Europe. Although the French army had been decimated by the failed 1812 invasion of Russia, the Emperor Napoleon continued to fight the allies arrayed against France and to threaten all of Europe and Great Britain. He suffered another humiliating defeat at the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813. Within the next two years, the Bourbons, who had been ousted from the throne in 1789, were back in power. Strained by over twenty-five years of revolutionary politics and incessant warfare, France in the early nineteenth century was disillusioned by defeat and devoid of a clear sense of destiny.

Revolution and warfare were just two of France's manifold problems. France was plagued by grave political, economic, and social disorders. The economic and social changes caused by the transition from a predominantly rural and agricultural society to an urban and industrialized one threatened to disrupt French society, and the problems were all too often ineffectively addressed, or else ignored, by governmental authorities. The authorities of the Catholic Church, which was recovering from the serious and often deadly challenges to established religion that had begun with the Revolution in 1789, and who often favored conservative social and political solutions, were no more successful in either understanding or responding to the desperation of the common working people. Some groups of intellectuals, such as the followers of

the utopian social theorist Henri de Saint-Simon, began to suggest ways to improve the condition of the poor by forming ideal societies of laborers. They were often severe critics of both the government and the institutional Catholic Church.

Ozanam's short life spanned a tumultuous period of French political and social history. He witnessed two major political upheavals in France before 1850—the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty in the 1830 July Revolution that brought Louis-Philippe to power, and the end of Louis-Philippe's "bourgeois monarchy" during the Revolutions of 1848. With respect to social thought, at the early age of eighteen, in 1831, he openly criticized Saint-Simon's teachings in a published document. He argued that Saint-Simon's utopian ideas offered those living in poverty a false hope for, and an equally false path toward, a better life. Two years later, in 1833, while Ozanam was a student in Paris, certain young followers of Saint-Simon dared him to practice what he preached. In response to their taunt, Ozanam and several like-minded students formed a group that they called the conference of charity. Starting with only seven members, its numbers soared to more than one hundred by 1834. By 1835, the conference of charity had its own official "Rule" and a new official name: the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Today, the Society is active in approximately 150 countries around the world and is still growing. During his lifetime Ozanam gradually became committed to the principles of Christian democracy and favored a French republic that supported the poor, not just the rich. At the time of his death in 1853, however, France was once again an empire ruled by a Napoleon, with the coronation of Louis-Napoléon as Napoleon III in 1852.

Ozanam led an interesting life in a turbulent period of French history, and it is his life that this book will explore. This biography of Ozanam is also intended to fill a gap. Although there are a number of fine, recent studies about Ozanam produced in France, most have not been translated into English and are not, therefore, readily accessible to English-speaking readers. There are also histories written in English, but they are, for the most part, out-of-date or incomplete. Many of the older works provide essential information but do not cite sources or adequately identify the references for their evidence. In many cases, they do not meet modern scholarly standards. To date, there are no comprehensive, recent biographies of Ozanam in English. Some of the

newer studies are helpful but are often intended primarily for a local or limited popular audience.

This biography is not a straightforward chronological account of Ozanam's life. In the first part, I explore the various roles he filled in his forty years on earth—as son, sibling, student, member of and inspiration for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, scholar, spouse, and spokesperson for the common people. In the second part, I examine the lessons he learned in his life that can be shared by those who study his thought and work for insights. Among those lessons are the importance of friendship, the meaning and significance of solidarity, the nature of spirituality and the desire for sanctification, the role and purpose of suffering, the nature and importance of servant leadership, and the seeds of systemic thinking and systemic change planted in his lifetime, to be harvested in a later era. At the end of Part II, I review his living and enduring legacy. Although Ozanam feared that he would not have a fruitful career, his legacy remains a powerful testimony to his greatness.

PART I

OZANAM'S LIFE

CHAPTER 1

Son and Sibling

On April 23, 1813, Antoine Frédéric Ozanam was born in Milan, the capital of Lombardy in the Italian peninsula. That peninsula has long been associated with Dante and St. Francis of Assisi, both of whom Ozanam later eloquently celebrated in his scholarly work. French victories over Austria had brought Milan into the French fold. After Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's final defeat, however, Milan was returned to Austria in 1815. Ozanam's father had "no taste to live under the new regime of the Lombard-Venetian Kingdom." The family found their way back to Lyon, France, from which both his parents originated. According to Ozanam's friend Léonce Curnier, at the time the young Frédéric (as he was called by many of his family and friends) was "barely able to get out of the cradle."2 In fact, when the family sailed from Milan to Marseilles on October 31, 1816, Frédéric was "a toddler of 3 years and a half, too young to keep his hometown memories precise." Once the family settled in Lyon, "the home of his mother could thus count him among its most illustrious children because it [was] in Lyon that he received the first education of the domestic hearth, which truly engenders in us the

moral life." Curnier has remarked that Ozanam was the product of two places: "Ozanam felt this double origin. Italy and France had both left their mark, as if two fairies had made him a gift each by rocking him in their arms." He has been joined in that view by Père Lacordaire: "Frederic Ozanam . . . had in him the influence of two skies and two sanctuaries. Lyon had anointed him with a serious piety; Milan, something of a brighter flame. The city of St. Ambrose and of St. Irenaeus had joined, to baptize him, the graces of their traditions." Whatever the truth of these descriptions, a curious mixture of seriousness and burning zeal would remain hallmarks of Ozanam's character throughout his life.

Ozanam did not return to Milan until seventeen years later, when he journeyed to Italy with his parents in 1833 to visit relatives. This trip fed his growing interest in literature and history, especially the history and literature of the Middle Ages. His mother stayed with her sister in Florence while Monsieur Ozanam trekked toward the north and center of Italy with his two older sons, Frédéric and Alphonse.⁷ The young Charles most likely was left at home in the care of Marie Cruziat, the trusted household servant. Alphonse described the effect on his younger sibling of the visit to Milan: "Our brother . . . was then 20 years of age. His soul was full to overflowing of ardent enthusiasm. He saw the street, San Pietro a L'Orto, where he had been born; the Church, Santa Maria de' servi, where he had been baptized. Kneeling at the holy font he renewed his baptismal vows and thanked God for having made him His child."8 But it was not only Milan that impressed the young scholar. Bologna with its rich medieval past, Rome with its rich Christian heritage and its invaluable manuscripts, and, most of all, Florence, where every corner provided an encounter with the great poet Dante, left an indelible mark on the impressionable Frédéric. As Alphonse suggests, the trip profoundly influenced his brother's life, teaching, and scholarship.9

Lyon, the city that Ozanam would always call home, exercised an equally important sway on the young boy. Known as the city of bridges, Lyon is located at the convergence of the Rhône and Saône rivers. Long a bastion of Christianity, its citizens had a particular devotion to the Blessed Mother. Many made the pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre Dame de Fourvières, located on a height above the city, where it had existed since the second century. Lyon sparked in Frédéric a fire of devotion to

the Virgin Mary that would last throughout his life. His devotion later inspired him to suggest her as the patroness of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.¹⁰ There is also no doubt that he "was in love with this city . . . with its high narrow streets, its embankments, its hills, its 'slopes,' its panoramas, its noise (the clatter of the [silk] looms, the stamping of the horses pulling the countless heavy cargoes of silk bundles), and its active and industrious population." As late as 1843 he recalled in a letter to Dominique Meynis his deep attachment to Lyon, by the very "roots of the heart." In that same letter Frédéric wrote, "since I was called to my perilous Parisian functions, each year I went to put them under the patronage of Notre-Dame de Fourvières, to which I have been devoted since childhood."12 A journalist in the early twentieth century asserted that Lyon "has always been one of the centers where spiritual life and Christian thought exist in all their intensity. . . . The soul of the natives of Lyon is deeply religious and accompanied by a remarkably practical and cool spirit and a bold enterprising character." Ozanam, proud of his origins in Lyon, exhibited much of this Lyonnais soul in his lifetime.

THE OZANAM FAMILY: HIS FATHER

The Ozanam family was not only proud of its Lyonnais origins but also traced its heritage back to Roman times. According to family lore, a distant ancestor of Frédéric's father was a praetor in the thirty-eighth Roman Legion, named Jeremiah Hozannam. Entering Gaul with the conquering Julius Caesar, Hozannam was rewarded with a share of the conquered lands north of Lyon, known later as the village of Boulignieus. The land was covered with woods and swamps, but, despite these obstacles, Jeremiah reclaimed it for use. He founded a small Jewish colony, which prospered. Long after Jeremiah's death, in the seventh century, the Hozannam family was baptized. According to the family account, an ancestor named Samuel Hozannam had offered shelter to St. Didier after the saint had denounced the reigning queen for her wickedness.14 St. Didier, grateful for his kindness and hospitality, baptized Samuel and his people, bringing them into the Christian fold. From that point in the detailed family genealogical record, Christian names such as Matthias, John, and Peter appear. It was not until Frédéric's grandfather, Benedict,

decided to drop one letter "n" and the letter "h" from the family name that the spelling "Ozanam" became the permanent family designation.¹⁵

Frédéric's father, Jean-Antoine-François Ozanam, belonged neither to the traditional aristocracy nor to the upper middle class. He was also not from the working class or the Lyon merchant class, to which his wife's family belonged. One historian places him in a category he calls "bourgeoisie with talent" (*bourgeoisie à talent*), suggesting that he was bourgeois but probably better off than the average Lyonnaise bourgeoisie. ¹⁶ Frédéric's father would certainly add luster to the Ozanam family name.

As a young boy, Frédéric delighted in his father's stories about his military service. The father regaled his sons with the true story of how he had rescued his own father from death at the hands of the Committee of Public Safety during the infamous Reign of Terror of the French Revolution. A soldier in the regiment of the Berchiny Hussars, ¹⁷ Jean-Antoine risked his life by leaving his regiment to try to retrieve his father from the clutches of the Terrorists. As he mounted his horse, he promised his mother that all would be well, though he knew in his heart that the situation was desperate. Along with some companions from his regiment, he dashed to Bourg, where the Committee of Public Safety was in session. There, he discovered that his father was imprisoned on the charge of treason, which meant certain death in the tempestuous days of the Terror. Jean-Antoine drew his weapons and demanded his father's immediate release. The Terrorists, intimidated by this unexpected chain of events, yielded to his request. As quickly as they had arrived, Jean-Antoine and his associates fled the vicinity of Bourg with their prize. Fortunately for them, their absence from the regiment was never noticed. When the Reign of Terror came to an end soon afterward, the threat of any action against either Jean-Antoine or his father was removed.¹⁸ As one biographer remarks, "Is it any wonder that hero worship was mixed with the love and regard of young Frederick Ozanam for his father? The boy's lively imagination enabled him to relish to the full all the true stories of the hussar's dash and daring, to see him in the brave Berchiny uniform and live again for himself the battles in which this father of his had shown such valor as to gain the approving notice of his commander and earn rapid promotion." 19 Jean-Antoine's army career came to an honorable end in 1798, when he retired from military service at the age of twenty-five with the rank of captain.²⁰

From their father, Frédéric and his siblings inherited valuable traits and learned precious lessons. A person of staunch character, Jean-Antoine had tried several professions before becoming a practicing doctor of medicine, during his residence in Italy. He earned his medical degree from the University of Pavia. His determination and resolve are witnessed by the fact that every three months for two years he traveled on foot the difficult nineteen-mile route from Milan to Pavia in order to obtain his degree because he could not afford the stagecoach fare.²¹ The medical profession would be more than a job for Doctor Ozanam; it was a calling, a kind of priesthood, for which he eventually sacrificed his life. Remuneration was never the first thing on his mind in treating his patients. His reputation grew not only as a practitioner and medical scholar but also as a cultural scholar.²² His eldest son, Alphonse, attested to his father's temperament: "My father was an extremely strong character, but a great heart, tender, compassionate and very sensitive, full of courage, honor and dedication."²³ He placed a premium on "righteousness and . . . rigor in social morality: traits that we will meet again in Frederic."24 According to Ozanam's biographer Marcel Vincent, Jean-Antoine "never relinquished either his spirit of enterprise or . . . his anti-conformity, qualities that his children will be indebted to him more from heredity than from education."25 Jean-Antoine indeed did not bend easily to authority. His anticonformity extended even to matters religious. Historian Gérard Cholvy indicates that he was an independent thinker. Jean-Antoine disliked the Jesuits in particular, and he feared that the further the Catholic Church moved away from its primitive roots and precepts, the more isolated from the authentic spirit of Christianity it would become.²⁶ He was also concerned by clergy who seemed opposed to the ideas of the progress of the human spirit and enlightenment.²⁷ According to Cholvy, Jean-Antoine was "a friend of truth" and would defend it vigorously.²⁸

Enlightenment of the mind through education was a cherished treasure in the Ozanam household, and, despite his busy professional schedule, Frédéric's father took an active interest in his children's learning. While living in Milan, the doctor had been responsible for the schooling of his children, which "included Latin, French, Italian and mathematics." He expected high standards of his brood and regularly checked their homework assignments. As Frédéric later remembered of his father, "He loved Science, Art, and work. He inspired us with a taste

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for the beautiful and sublime."30 These latter tastes found an especially receptive home in Frédéric. But Jean-Antoine also knew how to make learning a pleasure, showing his children that all of life was a learning experience to be intimately embraced. The family enjoyed "long runs in the countryside, often four or five leagues, to fortify our health and harden us from fatigue." The father used these excursions as teaching moments: to spark informative conversation, to hunt and identify butterflies, or to catch caterpillars in glass jars so that the children could observe and care for them, learn about the plants upon which they feed, witness their metamorphosis into cocoons, and then behold their emergence as butterflies.31 Doctor Ozanam was an advocate of the classical ideal of a sound mind and body. He not only brought his clan on runs but also taught his children how to swim in the nearby river waters.³² Cholvy notes that a certain penchant for Jean-Jacques Rousseau can be detected in his pedagogical principles, because Rousseau favored an experiential education for children and the freedom to explore.³³

Doctor Ozanam's influence extended into matters religious as well. His children witnessed his participation in the processions and devotions of the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament; they knew that he not only prayed with and for his patients but often sent for the priest when death was near for the person in his charge. Frédéric was quick to point out that throughout adversity, his father always kept "the faith, a noble character and a strong sense of justice, a tireless charity for the poor." His older brother Alphonse added to this image of a man of faith the following memories: "My father was sincerely religious and he had a living faith: every night there was family prayer with his wife, his children, and our good Marie [Marie Cruziat, the family's faithful domestic servant]. Often even a devotional reading followed prayer!" Léonce Curnier's biography of Frédéric Ozanam offers a marvelous summary of this extraordinary father's character:

A learned and skillful physician, he joined together the most extensive knowledge, the strongest education, admirable charity; his profession was for him a true ministry of charity. No one knew better than the good doctor the way to the home of the poor person. He did not confine himself to merely giving him the alms of his care, he gave him besides . . . the alms of his heart, seeking to console him, addressing him with

pious encouragements, for in this unfortunate person crushed under the weight of suffering, he saw a brother and one of the best friends of his God.... He turned the thought of the patient to the supreme physician, and he prayed with him at the foot of his bed. He constantly acquitted his mission with dedication, a selflessness to which religion alone has the secret; he was to die in the exercise of a ministry so nobly understood.³⁷

In their own ways, the lives of the doctor's two sons would testify to both the quality and integrity of their father's life. Both sons, however, would also have to face the strong convictions of their father, who mapped out careers for them that were not in full accord with their wishes.

THE OZANAM FAMILY: HIS MOTHER

Frédéric's mother was Marie Nantas, the daughter of a Lyon silk merchant. She married Jean-Antoine in 1800, when she was barely nineteen and he was twenty-seven. After settling with him in Paris and enjoying an initially successful and prosperous life together, she eventually followed her husband to Milan. One explanation for the move to Milan revolves around an imprudent decision made by Jean-Antoine to help a needy relative, a decision that left the family near bankruptcy and proved an embarrassment. Another explanation is based on political exigencies, including the war with England and the Continental blockade, which closed off some favorable trading opportunities for the Ozanam family. An ever loyal wife, Marie again supported her husband's decision to relocate from Milan to Lyon in 1816, after Milan was returned to Austria.

Marie had her own stories about the French Revolution, which rivaled those of Jean-Antoine. Hers were tales not of heroic exploits but of affliction and suffering. In May 1793, Lyon rebelled against the Jacobin revolutionary government centered in Paris. The Committee of Public Safety, the governing body led by Maximilien Robespierre in Paris, ordered the siege of Lyon. During the siege, Marie Nantas and her sisters crouched in cellars while her father, a captain in charge of the city's fortifications, worked tirelessly to safeguard his beloved

home. Her brother, Jean-Baptiste, who was barely nineteen, was put to death at Bouttreaux. The painful memory of his passing remained with her throughout her life. Not only did she lose her brother, she was also separated from her parents when they were imprisoned for their resistance. She remembered how she feared that she would never again see them alive.⁴³ The beseiged city fell in October 1793 and was dealt with brutally; the conquerors meant for no one to "escape from . . . just vengeance."44 Whether or not the vengeance was just can be debated, but that it was ruthless is without question. The Reign of Terror fed on such violence. In the words of R. R. Palmer, during the Terror, "Suspects poured into the prisons, and the guillotines fell more frequently on outstretched necks. The more the deaths mounted, the more enemies the executioners had to fear. The more severe the government became the more opposition it aroused, and the only answer to opposition seemed to be an increase of severity." 45 Lyon felt the full wrath of the Terror. Less than one year after the rebellion began, "almost two thousand persons had been put to death at Lyons, more than a tenth of all those sentenced by revolutionary courts for all France during the whole period of the Terror. Of the victims at Lyons 64 percent came from the middle and upper classes. For France outside Lyons the figure for these classes was only 28 percent."46 The Lyonnaise bourgeoisie paid a heavy price for their opposition.

Miraculously, Marie's parents were spared and the family were gradually reunited. For a time they found refuge and relief from the Terror in Switzerland. There, Marie received her first Holy Communion in a church used by Protestants and Catholics alike. When peace was finally declared, the Nantas family returned to their beloved Lyon, only to discover that their property had been confiscated and was irrecoverable. The family was no longer prosperous. Her early experiences taught Marie how to bear up under hardship and how to face poverty with fortitude. These lessons were not only valuable to her but were also conveyed to her children. The hardships she faced during the Terror also may have contributed to her "gentle melancholy," a trait exhibited later by her son Frédéric. The hardships she faced during the Terror also

As important as the influence of the father is on a family, the mother often has the most profound and lasting impact on her children. Frédéric's mother was no exception. A woman of great intelligence, Marie

could both write and speak well, had some talent for drawing, valued good literature, and loved music. According to Baunard, "No family feast was complete without a joyful song from that delightful mother."49 She shared her musical talents with her husband, who was adept at playing a number of instruments and who loved to hear the strains of music whenever he was home after his long medical rounds.⁵⁰ Marie also had the greatest influence on her children's religious development. As Frédéric recounted in 1831, he cherished "this Catholicism that I was once taught by the mouth of a great mother . . . and which nourishes so often my mind and my heart with its memories and the most beautiful hopes: Catholicism with all its grandeur, with all its delights!"51 Léonce Curnier asserts that Frédéric "found God with her and he never lost him." 52 She especially deepened all of her sons' faith by her own word and example.⁵³ Under her patient guidance, her children were taught their prayers and especially the importance and meaning of the Catholic mass.⁵⁴ She exercised a solid moral influence with a gentle manner that made her "the best obeyed and the most beloved of mothers."55 Like Frédéric's father, his mother also had a compassionate and charitable heart for those living in poverty. Madame Ozanam was one of "The Watchers," an association of women who took turns sitting at the bedside of those who were poor and sick. Often she and her husband would cross paths on their respective missions of care. From both his mother and father Frédéric received "the example of twenty years of . . . devoted charity before his eyes."56 It was a powerful lesson indeed. Their examples bore fruit later on in the charitable work of the conference of charity that became the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Frédéric's mother and father created a warm, loving household for their children. Members of the family all had their pet nicknames. Marie referred to her husband as "Oza," most often preceding it with *Cher* or *Pauvre*. She in turn was "Madame Oza." Frédéric's sister Élisabeth was assigned the shortened version "Élisa," and his older brother, Alphonse, became simply "Alph." Frédéric was referred to by his father as "Fred," but his mother affectionately dubbed him "Déric." Even the household servant, Marie Cruziat, had her nickname, "Guigui." Throughout his early life one of Frédéric's greatest joys was to return home for special occasions and celebrations. In his biography of Ozanam, Schimberg offers the following assessment of the parents' powerful impact

on Frédéric's character: "The complex character of Frederick Ozanam reflected his father's energy, dogged perseverance, serenity, and even gaiety . . . in the face of hardships and struggles; love of books and all intellectual pursuits, devotion to duty, eagerness to help and willingness to follow up sympathy with action. It reflected, too, his mother's gracious and gentle personality, her love of beauty in nature and in art, her conscientious attitude toward life, which was regarded as a rather serious matter. From her he inherited a heart full of tenderness and an inclination to diffidence and melancholy." Theirs would be a lasting influence on their son.

THE FIFTH CHILD: FRÉDÉRIC

Frédéric was the fifth child to whom Marie gave birth. Because of the plague in Milan at the time, his baptism was postponed for a few weeks, until May 13, when it was held in the Church of Santa Maria dei Servi. The baby Frédéric had only two surviving siblings at the time—Alphonse and Élisabeth. Two other children had already died at a very tender age. Unfortunately, the family faced the tragic loss of their children numerous times. Only four of the fourteen children born to Marie and Jean-Antoine reached early adulthood—Alphonse, Élisabeth, Frédéric, and Charles, and only the three male children survived past the age of twenty. Élisabeth lived to the age of nineteen, Frédéric to the age of forty, and Charles and Alphonse to the ages, respectively, of sixty-six and eighty-four. The early deaths of so many children meant perpetual sorrow in the household. Carrying fourteen children would be a heavy physical burden for most women, but it was especially burdensome for Marie, whose health was described as "delicate."

Fortunately for the Ozanams, their faith counseled them that death was not only the end of life but the beginning of a new one. This comforting belief fortified the family in their losses and their sorrows. Frédéric clearly understood this: "On how many occasions have I not seen my parents in tears; when heaven had left them but three children out of fourteen! But how often, too, have not those three survivors, in adversity and in trial, counted on the assistance of those brothers and sisters whom they had among the angels! . . . Happy is the home that can count

one half its members in Heaven, to help the rest along the narrow way which leads there!"⁶⁵ When writing this passage, Frédéric must certainly have recalled that he nearly died at the age of six.⁶⁶ In June 1819 Frédéric became seriously ill, and "death was on his lips." The illness was most likely typhoid fever, which often proved fatal. Doctor Ozanam consulted with other physicians. The situation looked bleak, and they counseled the family to prepare for the worst. For two weeks Frédéric was delirious and in agony. It is little wonder that his mother turned to prayer, asking Saint Francis Regis for his intercession on behalf of her son and placing a relic of the saint around his neck. In his delirium, Frédéric suddenly requested a drink of beer, which he normally found repugnant. Stunned by the request, the parents brought him the beer. Shortly thereafter he began to show signs of revival, and the illness finally subsided.⁶⁷

Although he made a complete recovery, Frédéric's convalescence was slow. His father began to instruct him in Latin during this period, both to occupy him and to excite his mind. Later, the young Frédéric was convinced that the beer was the cure: "I had a serious illness, which brought me so near death that everybody said I was saved by a miracle; not that I wanted kind care: my dear father and mother hardly left my bedside for fifteen days and nights. I was on the point of expiring when suddenly I asked for some beer. I had always disliked beer, but it saved me." His parents attributed his recovery to the power of intercessory prayer. In spite of his recovery, however, Frédéric's health remained problematic throughout his life. He had "a delicate constitution" since birth. For several months after his birth, his face was covered with a milky crust and his eyes were closed. As an infant, he also contracted whooping cough twice, nearly dying in both instances.

In spite of his persistent ill health, Frédéric never became a bookworm. He loved games and the outdoors, where he "was very appreciative of the beauties of nature." Nor was he always submissive to others. He had a willful side too, like most young boys. When playing games he could be a sore loser. Although he insisted on fair play, when he lost or was wrong he would refuse to admit it to his playmates, stamping his feet and yelling that he "would rather die than say it." Ozanam later admitted his faults: "I studied Latin, and in studying it I acquired malice. Truly I have never been as bad, I believe, as I was at eight. Nevertheless a good father, mother and brother went on with my schooling. At that time I had

no friends besides my family. I became bad tempered, arrogant and disobedient. I was punished, and grew obstinate under it. . . . I would write letters to Mama to plead for me. And then there began to run through my head all kinds of wicked ideas that I tried in vain to resist."⁷⁴

THE DEATH OF ÉLISABETH AND THE HELP OF GUIGUI

Perhaps one of the main reasons Frédéric, who was so "very good and docile" at an earlier age, began to act out when around the age of eight was not his Latin instruction but rather the death of his only sister, Élisabeth. Frédéric recalled the love and attention of his "beloved sister, who taught me together with my mother, and their lessons were so good, so well presented, so well tempered to my childish mind that I found real pleasure in them."75 Élisabeth died in November 1820 after a severe illness. Stricken with a sudden headache and fever, she complained of pain in her ears, neck, and eyes. Doctor Ozanam examined her and found her pulse rapid and her breathing labored. When she showed little improvement by the next morning, the doctor sent for colleagues, who counseled him that she might have contracted meningitis. ⁷⁶ Her suffering first began on the nineteenth of November and ended on the twenty-ninth. The medicinal treatments proved ineffective. She was only nineteen years old.⁷⁷ The grieving father provided this beautiful testimony to his daughter's goodness: "This child, endowed with rare virtue, of great piety, kind, nice, full of knowledge and talents for languages and drawing, was the friend and the companion of her mother, the joy and the consolation of her unfortunate father, loved by her two brothers and esteemed by all who knew her. Gay and cheerful in our home, loving little the world and its pleasures, she was all for God and her family. Our desolation has been at its peak, and, if there is any consolation for us, it is to see her constantly before our eyes, placed in the blissful dwelling where we will rejoin her when it pleases God to receive us."78

Frédéric was devastated. As one of his biographers remarks, "For more than two years he was to wage an inward struggle between wanting to please his parents, even if apparently only to keep faith with Élisa, and wanting to withdraw into the private world of his own thoughts." He eventually adjusted to her loss, but he would never forget the

influence of his dear sister. Later in his life he wrote the following lines in the manner of a dedication in the preface of his book *La civilisation au cinquième siècle*: "In the midst of a century of skepticism, God gave me the grace to be born in the faith. As a child, he put me on the knees of a Christian father and a saintly mother; he gave me as the first teacher an intelligent sister, pious as the angels that she went to rejoin." ⁸⁰

The household servant Marie Cruziat, fondly referred to by all the family as "Guigui," watched out for Frédéric once Élisa was gone, even carrying food to his room whenever he was ill or was being punished for misbehavior. 181 Cruziat, who was forty-five at the time of Frédéric's birth, lived to be eighty-nine, dying in 1857. 182 She served the Ozanam family for seventy-two years as "a model, unique perhaps, of fidelity, devotion, and constancy." Frédéric "benefited from the warmth" of her presence in his life. 184 As a young village girl, the feisty Marie Cruziat had fended off a wolf attack on livestock with only her shoe as a weapon. In her service to the Ozanam family, she rose every morning at six a.m. in the summer and at seven a.m. in the winter. Her cooking was excellent; she was economical, scrupulously watching out for the household budget. Although faithful, however, she was not without her faults. She was prone to grumbling and occasionally using coarse language, both of which drove Frédéric's mother to distraction.

With Guigui's help, Frédéric managed to survive the trauma of his sister's passing, but he still remained *le petit dernier* (the last little one) in his family for the next four years, until December 1824, when Charles was born. Frédéric was actually glad to be rid of the attention that is normally lavished on the youngest child: The new baby had become a welcome centre of attention. It little brother could sometimes annoy him, Prédéric remained a caring and devoted brother to his new sibling, whom he affectionately referred to as "my Charlot."

APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER

Frédéric Ozanam did not grow up to be one of those handsome, dashing young men whose attractive features, impressive physique, and elegant style immediately command the attention of others. One of the best likenesses of the young Frédéric is the pencil sketch of Louis Janmot, a close childhood friend.90 He was of average build and "of medium height."91 The only reference point we have for his height is a comment from Frédéric to his mother in 1832. Describing some of the young men who traveled with him to participate in a Corpus Christi procession in Nanterre, he wrote that "most sport moustaches, and five or six reach to five feet eight inches."92 This was considered fairly tall for his day.93 In 1848, the average height for French soldiers was listed as between sixtythree to sixty-five inches. 94 Frédéric was therefore probably in the same range. He reportedly shared "the pallor of the Lyons people."95 With "chestnut hair, large nose, and grey eyes," he had at first glance "a rather wild look" about him or a "strange appearance," because his hair was often long and disheveled.⁹⁶ His eyes were weak; he was nearsighted, causing him to sometimes appear perplexed or embarrassed. And indeed he was prone to embarrassment in certain situations. 97 Often there was "awkwardness in his first words. His speech, at the beginning, seemed to suffer from some sort of physical shyness; it was difficult, slow."98 Although Ozanam was precocious, his mind was often "anxious and indecisive."99 Yet "he had a face that preserved an expression of sweetness," while his "eyes flashed fire." On second glance, according to his brother Charles, one could not remain "indifferent to this expression of softness and goodness, transmitted from the heart."101 He had a compelling smile "of very spiritual fineness" 102 and enjoyed laughter, puns, and happy moments with his friends. 103

Frédéric would have been the first to confess that he had an extremely nervous temperament that occasionally "made him very irritable and . . . impatient." However, "all his life, . . . he fought with courage this evil inclination." He continuously worked on exercising patience and would readily apologize to any person whom he thought he had offended by a sharp word. Description to a fault and severe with himself, yet he was very tolerant of others. In 1830, the seventeen-year-old Frédéric confided in a letter to a classmate and close friend both his bad and his good points in an honest self-assessment:

I believe that I have always a good enough heart, cherish my friends, am habitually compassionate toward the poor, grateful to those who are good to me, and never hold a grudge. That is what I was; this is what I am. I tell

you everything without prejudice, the bad and the good. As for the bad, I reduce it to four predominant faults: pride, impatience, weakness, and an extreme meticulousness. Pride and everything in its train: love of praise, difficulty in seeing my faults, sometimes a bit of arrogance. Impatience, only toward my little brother, who often riles me. When I speak of weakness, I mean human respect, little firmness in holding to a resolution, etc., and scrupulosity, extreme meticulousness, I mean regarding spiritual matters and exactness in composition. Add to these faults that of despising the neighbor a little too easily and you have my bad side.

As to the good in me, it is this: a heart which I think not perverse, an intention ordinarily excellent, but which often fails in certain circumstances, and a desire to do well which dominates me overall. I think I possess the two qualities which make a good Frenchman, patriotism and loyalty. I love my country very much and have ever abhorred duplicity. . . . I think I am grateful and am certain I keep secrets well. For the rest I am devoted to religion without being very pious, which is why I can sometimes be or appear intolerant. I swear that I love to work, but I let myself be distracted easily. To sum up, 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. There is your man: I have told all; I have opened my heart to you; you know me thoroughly. 107

His letter offers a glimpse into the mind and heart of Ozanam and demonstrates the thoughtful introspection that was one of his hallmarks. In his biography of Ozanam, Schimberg offers this assessment of Frédéric's character: "He was not without temptations to stubborn willfulness and to pride. There were and would continue to be contradictions in his soul, tendencies in conflict with one another. The sublime height of spiritual greatness to which he finally attained was won only by the most strenuous kind of climbing, begun early in life."

THE DEATHS OF PARENTS

As a faithful and loving son, Frédéric Ozanam often worried about his parents' health and welfare. He knew that as they grew older, the charitable work in which they engaged often placed them in dangerous conditions. On April 11, 1837, Frédéric wrote to his mother that "it is upsetting to learn that Papa is traveling the streets at night, in the lingering sleet which is so dangerous." ¹⁰⁹ He most likely feared that his father might suffer a serious injury from a fall on ice or in the dark of night. Both parents had promised not to climb the unsafe stairwells to the garrets of those living in poverty; both were unfaithful to this promise.110 His father had survived the terrible cholera epidemic of 1832 even while aiding afflicted patients¹¹¹ and was in excellent health, despite his tiring duties and his worries. 112 The only infirmity from which he occasionally suffered was lightheadedness, which may have played a role in his eventual demise. 113 On May 12, 1837, a month after Frédéric had fretted to his mother about his father traveling at night, the sixty-three-year-old Jean-Antoine made a fatal miscalculation. In the dark of night he mistook a staircase leading to a cellar for the one that would lead up to the invalid he intended to visit. Losing his balance, he had a terrible fall and suffered a severe blow to his head. He survived for only a few hours after the deadly accident, time enough to receive the consolation of the last rites. 114 His death came as a complete surprise to his family.

At the time, Frédéric was studying in Paris. With no railway and no telegraph, it took him at least three days to discover the full extent of the tragedy. 115 Frédéric had little choice but to take charge. His brother Charles was too young to do so. His older brother, Alphonse, who had chosen the priesthood over a career in medicine against the father's wishes, "was taken up with his 'missions." The young, inexperienced, and grieving Frédéric had to carry the "burden of settling his father's affairs, of becoming master of his house. . . . It was a dreary and doleful necessity."116 Moreover, he had the added concern of his mother's health and state of mind. 117 One of his friends, Léonce Curnier, sensed that Frédéric would be distraught by his father's untimely demise. He sent sincere condolences and received a reply from Frédéric that exhibited "all the sensitivity of his heart and all the maturity of his judgement." 118 Frédéric wrote to Léonce that although his friend's letter "has been the first, it was no less sweeter than the others." For Frédéric, the death of his father was "most overwhelming. It . . . leaves behind it a sort of terror."120 He poignantly described his deepest fears:

As a young child, accustomed to live in the shadow of another, if he is left for an hour alone in a house, penetrated with the feeling of his own weakness, is frightened and begins to weep, so, when one has lived so peacefully in the shadow of a paternal authority, of a visible providence in which he trusted for all things, in seeing it all at once disappear, in finding himself alone, charged with an unaccustomed responsibility in the midst of this bad world, he experiences one of the most grievous troubles which have been prepared since the commencement of the world to chastise fallen man. It is true that my mother is still here to encourage me with her presence and bless me with her hands; but cast down, suffering, desolating me by the uneasiness her health gives me. It is true that I have excellent brothers; but however good those are with whom we are surrounded, they cannot supply the absence of those who protected us. Myself, above all, of an irresolute and fearful temperament, I need not only to have better men than myself about me, but to have them also above me. I need intermediaries between my littleness and the immensity of God; and now I am like him who, living in a stormy region, under the shelter of a large roof in which he had put his confidence, should see it rudely blown away, and should be left forlorn under the infinite vault of the heavens.121

One can sense in this letter the palpable anguish of Ozanam. He continued his litany of worry to Léonce: "I do not know if I make you comprehend my principal kind of affliction; add to it the spectacle of the affliction of my family, the rapidity of the blow which has struck us, the affairs of a succession importunately mingled with the sadness of a mourning, and many things too long to say."

There was, however, a significant consolation, to which he clung. "For the rest, we feel a great consolation in thinking that the piety of my father, strengthened during these last years by a more frequent use of the sacraments, the virtues, the labours, the griefs, the perils of his life, have rendered easy to him the access to the celestial dwelling place; and that soon, if we are good, we shall find him again at the eternal rendezvous, where death shall not be." Frédéric closed with a final request of Léonce: "What would it serve me, my dear friend, to tell you of my griefs, if I could only sadden you by my recitals? And what a cruel pleasure it would be to make for friendship a community of troubles!

But when we pour these troubles into a heart loving and religious at one time, we draw forth from it a prayer, and this prayer rises agreeable towards heaven, which hears it always. It is, then, before God that I desire that you would remember my misfortunes, and the needs of my entire family." This letter to Léonce Curnier is at one and the same time a frank admission of Frédéric's deepest anxieties and a powerful testimony to his deep faith, which had been nourished by the example of both his father and his mother.

In a letter of May 20, Frédéric informed Emmanuel Bailly, the president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, of his father's passing: "My poor father is dead. But I am writing to you to let you know that the liveliness of his faith, the piety he showed in a special way so very recently, the religious consolations he received, give us reason to hope strongly for the welfare of his soul if the many prayers go up to God in whom he ever hoped."125 He then made a passionate request for prayers: "Those prayers, I write to ask you for them. My father knew from its beginning and loved our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. He rejoiced to see his son called as one of the first to take part in it. He often encouraged [me] by his advice and example [despite] my inexperience in good works. He himself always welcomed and assisted the poor, whose unanimous sympathy is today one of our comforts." 126 With the deaths of both his father and André-Marie Ampère, who had supported him in his early student days in Paris, Frédéric placed himself in Bailly's guiding hands: "Adieu, Monsieur. After my poor father who raised me so tenderly, God gave me two persons to take his place at Paris at an age and during a stay filled with dangers: M. Ampère and you. Of the three, only you remain. Allow me, then, to transfer to you, as much as I can, all the unbounded confidence and unreserved and sometimes indiscreet affection I had for them."¹²⁷

With support from his friends and family, Frédéric proved equal to the tests that faced him. He decided to remain in Lyon for the time being to put the family affairs in order and to compensate for the loss of their father's income. He implored Bailly to continue to send writing assignments his way, for which he would receive some necessary income. He also engaged in tutoring students for the sake of additional income, as well as performing the legal duties in which he was employed at that time. Perhaps he remembered that his father had once tutored students in Milan to make ends meet. But as one biographer astutely observes,

"the trial was more severe than it had been for the father, less sensitive, less introspective, physically more robust and buoyed up by a more optimistic nature [than his son]." 130

Frédéric had described his father's death as "most overwhelming," but for him, "the death of a mother is most heartrending for her sons." 131 Within two years of their father's untimely death, the three sons also experienced the loss of their mother. Frédéric had grown accustomed to unburdening his soul to his mother: "I am a good enough child, but not at all a man of merit (as you would say), and I have a deal of selflove, but no esteem for myself whatever. I am not certain whether I am right or wrong to write you all this, but, good mother, I have too much need to unburden my heart." He trusted her: "Please believe, . . . good mother, ... that ... I find many things to recount to you, a wealth of ideas to confide in you, a wealth of affection to confide to your heart."133 He was often concerned about her health; she was never as robust as her spouse. In an 1836 letter he inquired: "How is that dear health? Is it stronger? Does it promise me a joyous arrival?"¹³⁴ In the letter of April 11, 1837, quoted above, a month before his father's death, Frédéric also expressed genuine concern about his mother's well-being: "Take care of that health which is not your own, but beloved to your children; do not expose it to the intemperance of this bad season; please, do not tire yourself."135 His concerns were justified.

The summer of 1839 was a difficult one for Madame Ozanam, whose suffering, both physical and mental, was intensified by the extreme summer heat. Her health fluctuated throughout the summer. In August, around the feast of the Assumption, the three brothers feared for the worst. For a brief period there was some hope of her recovery, but this hope was crushed. She passed away on October 14, 1839, joining her beloved Oza. According to Alphonse, "the death of our mother plunged Ozanam [Frédéric] into an inexpressible anguish." In late December Frédéric recounted for his friend François Lallier the last moments of his mother:

She hung on almost three days, calm, serene, murmuring prayers or answering by some words of ineffable maternal goodness to our caresses and attentions. Finally came the fatal night: I was the one watching by her. Weeping, I would suggest to this poor mother acts of

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faith, hope, and charity, which she had made me lisp once when I was very small. After about an hour new symptoms alarmed me. I called my older brother, who was sleeping in the next room. Charles heard us, and got up. The servants came running. All of us knelt around the bed. Alphonse said the heart-breaking prayers to which we replied with sobs. Every help which religion holds in reserve for this solemn hour, absolution, indulgences, were bestowed once more. The remembrance of a blameless life, and the good works which perhaps too many and too tiring had hastened its end, three sons preserved in the faith in the middle of so outrageous a time, and brought together there by an almost providential coincidence, and then, finally, the hopes already upon us of happy immortality—all these circumstances seemed joined to sweeten the horror and brighten the darkness of death. Neither convulsions nor agony, but a sleep which left her face almost smiling, a light breath which began to abate: an instant came when it was stifled.¹³⁹

Frédéric felt bereft: "we were left orphans." And then he shared with his true friend his most intimate sentiments about her death:

How to describe the desolation then and the tears streaming down, and yet the inexpressible, the ineffable interior peace we enjoyed, and how a new happiness seized upon us in spite of ourselves, and not only us, but the dearest members of the family; then that immense crowd at the funeral, and the tears of the poor, the prayers spontaneously offered up on all sides without waiting for us to ask for them, and finally, to come back to you, the loving ardor of friendship which was undoubtedly amazed at finding us so calm in our grief. Happy the man to whom God gives a holy mother! This dear memory has not left us. Even in my real solitude in the midst of the lassitude which often ravages my soul, the thought of this august scene comes to remind me, to raise me up again. Considering how short life is, how little distant undoubtedly will be the reunion of those separated by death, I feel the temptations to self-love and the evil instincts of the flesh vanish away. All my desired courage for one thing only: to die like my mother!

Only fourteen years later, he would indeed find the courage he needed to face death like his cherished mother.

Before his mother's passing, Ozanam had successfully passed his examinations for the title of Doctor of Literature, but he had decided to accept a position as professor of commercial law instead of the more tempting offer of a position of chair of philosophy in Orléans. The primary reason for his decision at the time was his mother's health. He did not want to leave her in Lyon "for ten months every year, at the risk of a similar shock to that which happened on the 12th [of] May, 1837."142 As he explained to Lallier, he never regretted this decision: "How I experience now the truth of your words, and how happy I am not to have deserted that bed of suffering and benediction to run after the doubtful promises of a university promotion! When, at the price of that negligible sacrifice, I could only have bought the favor of spending some months longer with my mother, to find myself at this final night I have been already paid too much. I had such regret at not being able to close the eyes of my poor unfortunate father! May they now be reunited in a common happiness, as they were here below in common works and troubles!"143

FRÉDÉRIC AND HIS BROTHERS

Even before his parents' passing, Frédéric was close to his two brothers, especially Alphonse. In 1836, three years after the family visit to Italy, Frédéric and Alphonse had enjoyed each other's company on a journey through Switzerland. Alphonse had "wanted to hike in Switzerland" as a necessary distraction from his "laborious occupations," and Frédéric "was his natural companion." Frédéric even referred to Alphonse in his correspondence as "my guardian angel." ¹⁴⁵ In numerous letters, Frédéric was also solicitous of his younger brother Charles's well-being, showing deep concern for "that little gentleman." After the deaths of both parents, however, the three "orphans"-Frédéric, Alphonse, and Charles—became "welded together," like the three musketeers of Dumas's imagination, a close-knit band trusting in each other's support and devotion. If Frédéric complained of his brothers, the complaints were about not being able to see them frequently.¹⁴⁸ His affection for his spouse after his marriage in 1841 in no way diminished his affection for his brothers. 149 On March 28, 1842, for example, he reaffirmed

their fraternal connection: "In praying for all [at the Easter ceremonies at Notre Dame], I could not forget my good brothers. I asked for you that wisdom which reinforces judgment, that strength which sustains the will amid the thunderstorms of adolescence. I have asked that you may preserve that piety with which you are endowed, so that you may know your vocation and will not fail in the courage to follow it, nor the consolations to embellish it. . . . I begged that fraternal union, symbol of and prelude to the celestial company of the saints, flourish among us." ¹⁵⁰

In the same correspondence, he was quick to applaud the academic success of his now seventeen-year-old brother Charles, offering him both encouragement and praise: "It was not without a lively pleasure that we learned of your placing second. . . . If you continue in this way, nothing prevents your having a share of the prizes at the end of the year. But it is especially proof of intellectual development. . . . You should be very grateful to the excellent M. Noirot, whose solicitude has made the introduction to philosophy easier for you.... His teaching is a great boon; I have daily proof of his influence over my early years." 151 He even rewarded Charles for his accomplishment with a small sum of money: "Do not despise a 20-sous piece from a poor professor, Alphonse will give it to you."152 Frédéric anticipated the day when "better circumstances will have brought us together. . . . I look forward to it eagerly: your being here will enliven our exile; and Amélie, who loves you very much, will be delighted to see one of her four brothers again." 153 His heartfelt letter to Charles concluded with the following request: "I will write to Alphonse in a few days; give him a fond hug for me and tell him what a painful privation it has been for me not to be able to visit him at Easter, like last year." The following excerpt from another letter to Charles in 1842 provides an intimate insight into the loving relationship of the two:

To-day [*sic*] is Sunday. We are in a little palace with a garden on the edge of the Luxembourg, whose green alleys form a delightful prospect from our windows. . . . I remember that Alphonse must by this [time] have left Lyons, that you are alone, and that consequently a little brotherly visit will not come amiss to you. And this reminds me, my dear boy, that we must strengthen our mind and our heart not to be afraid of solitude and not to give way to those temptations to melancholy which

are sure to assail us in it. You will soon be eighteen; at this age I had to leave all—or in those days we had all to leave—and to come away here, where I had not, like you, a brother and many friends. Instead of that I had a lonely room, books that had no memories for me, strange faces everywhere around me.

For you, whatever God's will may be, wheresoever your vocation may lead you, you will find a brother who will be a guide and a support to you; you will find the way prepared for you, a circle of friends, many less dangers awaiting you. You are in one of those periods of life when all the faculties take a rapid development; we feel ourselves growing and maturing. If I were near you, I would try and be of use to you; I would perhaps help to clear away your doubts, to direct your reading. It is a great pleasure to philosophize. Only yesterday I spent more than an hour and a half discussing the ideas of Plato with a friend. If you wrote to me fully on certain difficult points, I would try and answer them by long and full explanations; but you will do better to talk them over with your fellow-students, some of whom have great ability and experience. 155

Most of all, Frédéric wanted his family to remain close together. His wishes were finally fulfilled in 1844, when Charles resided with him and his wife Amélie in Paris and Alphonse lived in a Marist community "five minutes away" from their home. Charles eventually followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a doctor and a supporter of homeopathic medicine. Charles, Frédéric, and Amélie were also joined by Marie Cruziat (Guigui), "who has never been happier than among her sweet *children*." This scene of domestic happiness delighted Frédéric: "Amélie manages her increased household marvelously, and in her sweet company, that knowing and lively kindness, that Christian union under the eye of God, I have found the only kind of good fortune which does not dry up." Throughout his short lifetime, Frédéric, a faithful son and a devoted sibling, held precious the sacred bonds of family.