



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE US SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Contemplation: A Fine Soul

Blessed Frédéric, who is for us a model of lay holiness, fully lived his faith in every part of his life. He served the poor as a lifelong member of the Society he founded. He believed the time spent with friends was “*all in order to love God*”. [\[55, to his mother, 1833\]](#) He fulfilled his role as a professor “*in a Christian manner and [served] God in serving wholesome teaching.*” [\[516, to Foisset, 1843\]](#) And he expressed his view of the vocation of marriage by saying “*In your wife you will first love God...you will be her guardian angel, she will be yours.*” [\[107, to Curnier, 1835\]](#) In return, he was blessed with a wife of great holiness, who loved, comforted, and complemented him fully.

By the time she met Frédéric on November 13, 1840, the twenty-year-old Amélie Soulacroix had already turned down two marriage proposals, in part because she wished to provide care for her ailing brother Théophile. By contrast, as she would later write to Frédéric, from the moment she met the young professor “*I prayed for you to be my fiancé and for our eternal love before God and the Holy Virgin. From that moment on that is how I described you in my prayers.*” [\[Amélie, p.35\]](#) The feeling was mutual, and they were married only six months later.

Frédéric, though seven years her senior, was still establishing himself in his career; he did not offer her a life of wealth, and she barely knew him, yet she reassured him that “*I am not afraid. I have faith in God, my father, my mother, and in you.*” She later recalled that “*from that moment I felt that God was bestowing a great blessing upon me, far more than I deserved.*” [\[Amélie, p. 36\]](#) Amélie saw and felt God’s special grace in Frédéric, and her reassurances would continue to buoy him in times of difficulty throughout his life.

Through Amélie’s encouragement and love, Frédéric became more holy. And, although women could not become members of the Society at the time, Amélie grew to have a truly Vincentian heart, and participated in its works. On Sundays, they “*went to Mass and then to visit Fréd’s poor*” where they distributed food tickets from the Society and their own firewood. “*It is very sad,*” she explained, “*but we feel happier if we can give a little relief to these wretched people.*” [\[Amélie, p. 48\]](#)

We are called as Vincentians to grow in holiness together. Frédéric grew in holiness throughout his life together with his family, with his friends, with his Vincentian confères, and most especially with his wife. Amélie was truly the answer to the prayer he had offered for a future fiancé years before they met: “*I pray especially that she will come with a fine soul, that she brings great virtue, that she is a great deal better than I am, that she lifts me up and not drags me down, that she be courageous, because I am often timid, that she be fervent, because I am often lukewarm in the things of God...*” [\[107, to Curnier, 1835\]](#)

Contemplate

Who in my life encourages me to be better? Who in my life do I encourage to have a Vincentian heart?

Recommended Reading

[Amélie Ozanam, A Heart with Much Love to Give](#)