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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Society of St. Vincent de Paul Celebrates 175th Anniversary
World's largest lay Catholic charity has served the poor worldwide since 1833**

ST. LOUIS, MO – The largest lay Catholic charitable organization in the world was founded 175 years ago by a French college student named Frederic Ozanam. Ozanam founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul on April 23, 1833, his twentieth birthday, so that he and his schoolmates could put their faith into action through service to the poor. Known and loved for its thrift stores and food pantries and the personal visits of its members to the homes of the poor, the Society today has more than 690,000 members operating in 142 countries.

The Society's 115,000 U.S. members, known as "Vincentians," plan to mark this year's milestone with a series of commemorative activities. Festivities will officially begin with a special 175th Anniversary Liturgy and Commitment Ceremony to be celebrated in parishes nationwide on "Ozanam Sunday," April 20th. Three days later, April 23rd, on the actual anniversary date, the Society will open its four-day Midyear Meeting in St. Louis. The meeting will conclude on the 26th with another special Liturgy and a banquet featuring a reenactment of the Society's founding.

The 175th Anniversary celebrations will continue from May through August at regional meetings in Columbus, Dallas, St. Paul, Buffalo, Des Moines, Boise, Tampa, and Emmitsburg, Maryland. A special "Vincentian Heritage Retreat Day" will be held throughout the country on September 9th, the feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. The festivities will culminate with the Society's four-day Annual Meeting in Louisville and end September 27th, the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, the Society's namesake and patron.

"This will be a special year of grace for us, a time of renewal and refounding," declares Joe Flannigan, national president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States. "Every member of the Society can rediscover our Vincentian heritage and serve the poor with a deeper spirituality and dedication."

The Society's U.S. members donated nearly 6 million hours of their personal time in 2006, aiding more than 20 million of their neighbors in distress and offering services valued at nearly \$500 million. "The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is committed to ending poverty in America, one person at a time," says Roger Playwin, the Society's national executive director. "Donations of time, talent, and treasure are always welcome."

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