

Brief Reflection after Accepting the Ozanam Medal
Awarded to the Vincentian Community in Honor of the
400th Anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation of the Mission
Niagara University President's Dinner
November 5, 2025

I would like to begin by recognizing and congratulating our fellow award recipient, Mr. Scott Bieler, and I would like to thank Fr. Maher and Niagara University for bestowing the Ozanam Medal on the Vincentians

400 years ago, Saint Vincent de Paul gathered together with a group of people much like ourselves, although that group was much smaller. It included attorneys, generous benefactors, men and women, and of course Vincent de Paul.

Their vision in founding the Congregation of the Mission was not just Vincent de Paul's vision, but rather a vision formed jointly by Lord Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, his wife who is described as the noble and powerful Lady François-Marguerite de Silly, and Vincent. Their dream was [and I will be quoting at times from the original contract they signed. Their dream was] for God in His Divine Goodness to provide in His infinite mercy for the spiritual needs of the poor people of the rural areas who remained, as it were, abandoned.

Their motive, as expressed in the contract they signed, was their "gratitude for the goods and graces they have received and receive daily from God's Divine Majesty, and to contribute their part to His ardent desire for the salvation of poor souls, to honor the mystery of the Incarnation and the life and death of Jesus Christ, for love of His holy Mother, and also to try to obtain the grace of living the rest of their days so well that they and their family may hope to attain eternal glory."

They thought a solution could be achieved by forming a pious association of some priests who could devote themselves entirely and exclusively to the salvation of the poor common people," going from village to village "to preach, instruct, exhort, and catechize them."

God blessed the generosity of Lord de Gondi and Lady de Silly who helped form the vision and who provided the financial backing, and God called priests to join Vincent de Paul in this mission.

What we celebrate here today is that the vision formed 400 years ago, is alive and well at Niagara University. The same ingredients are in place. We are a group of women and men drawn together for a purpose. Each of us is aware and grateful that God has generously blessed us and continues to bless us. Each of us wants to respond to God's love. Each of us shares that vision, which we call our Vincentian and Catholic mission, to share God's love with others, especially with those who are less fortunate. Each of us wants to use our skills, our talents, and our resources, not for our own glory, but for God's glory.

Vincent de Paul could not have founded the Congregation of the Mission alone, and the Vincentian mission at Niagara University cannot be lived without all of you. This medal is accepted in your name as well as ours. May God be praised.