



**Our reflection openly reminds us that our good works are founded in the lives of those who have compassionately served others. As we continue in our journey may we be inspired and listen with the ear of our hearts to the voices and the stories of the past encouraging always the voices and stories of our future...**

### **Reading from the Song of Songs**

*"Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep love away.  
If one were to give all the wealth of one's house to obtain love,  
Love would be utterly scorned"*

This year the Society remembers, commemorates and celebrates the life and contribution of one of our founders Sr Rosalie Rendu through the 165<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death, which occurred in the year 1856. Sr Rosalie was a significant voice of influence for our young university students in the 1830s, especially Frederic Ozanam.

In her lifetime she provided a great example of humility, compassion, diligence and wise counsel and these values led her to do incredible work with those suffering in the depths of poverty.

During her time in the District where she worked for over 50 years Rosalie was a nurse, a justice of the peace, a catechist for the street children, and even a peacemaker between revolutionaries. She opened a free clinic, a pharmacy, a school, an orphanage, a childcare Centre, a home for the elderly and a youth club for young workers. She was a counsellor and advisor to many.

With one hand she received from the rich, with the other she gave to the poor. She became known as the "good mother of all". Sr Rosalie influenced, encouraged, supported and assisted Frederic Ozanam and his companions to work with the marginalised. Because Rosalie's good work had made her a recognised household name, the new group of university students gained instant respect which they would not have had otherwise. This was invaluable to the beginnings of the Society and through this the good works of the Society truly began.

There is much that Sister Rosalie can teach us. She is attributed with saying 'Never have I prayed so well as in the streets', and this a reminder that even as we give, we receive. Sister Rosalie encourages us that we are not superior as we go into the homes of people who are experiencing disadvantage, that we have as much to learn as to teach, and that there is value in every human being. Even as we work we are blessed, and our spirituality is not only applied by our good works, it is also nurtured by those good works.

Rosalie counselled Frederic, and I believe she continues to counsel us today, with these lasting words...

'God has already touched your heart, or you would not be giving up your precious day to serve the disadvantaged. And, because you see Christ in his poor, I know you will approach each one you visit with humility as their servant.'

'Always remember, that if we had been through the hardships they have had to meet, if our childhood had been one of constant want, perhaps, we too, would have given way to envy and hatred, as I must admit have many of the poor in this quarter.'

'So, be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them.'

May these words of Rosalie guide us too today as Members, Volunteers and Staff in our deliberations and discernments working in the service of love, joy, respect, hope and justice being enlivened and inspired by the determination and courage of those that we serve.

To this we pray, Blessed Rosalie Rendu, continue guide us. Amen!