

Presentation: Saint Louise De Marillac – July 2008 – (13)

Sr Catherine Salani DC

Presented July 10th 2008

I.) INTRO...



Thank you. It's great to be here in Bathurst, -- in Australia!
A country distinguished as the largest island, smallest continent.



Greetings to all of you who have traveled from different lands and other islands to be here.



I extend a tremendous thank you to the planning team for your steadfast efforts and preparation months in advance, and moment by moment at present in making this possible.

Australian hospitality is tops!

I am humbled and honored (mostly excited) to be here presenting on St. Louise De Marillac.



I am delighted to bring St. Louise De Marillac to life in some creative ways.

During this time, I am going to ask you to be aware of anything that catches your imagination. If you find this happening, we'll call this the work of the Spirit. And we don't want to miss the stirrings of the Spirit! Pay attention to what goes on in you, make a little note – and do reflect on it later. Allow it to come to life in you.

And now, let us take a moment's pause to call upon the Spirit and St. Louise. Let's ask both to accompany us. May we open ourselves to the blessings of this moment – to see what we need to see, hear what we need to hear, and speak what needs to be heard.

(Pause)

HEARTBEAT DRUMMING

God of the Journey, We have arrived. You have brought us to the “now” of this moment. In the words of St. Louise, “May we make room for the guidance of God.” In the Spirit of St. Louise, give us the grace to wait for and believe that the next thought, the next sentence, the next word, will reveal to us what we are meant to become.

HEARTBEAT DRUMMING

The Drumming actually is that of a heartbeat...reminding us that the rhythm of life is always with us.

II.) **PRESENTATION:**

Theme: Experience Family, Witness and Mission. God's Story and Ours.

I've had you and St. Louise on my mind for months now. As I reflected on the theme, I had some of my own criteria. In creating this presentation I wanted it to be enjoyable and engaging, after all, we're at a celebration, are we not?! In other words humor me with my own criteria when it's over and tell me it was informative and inspiring.

I have further developed the theme Experience Family, Witness and Mission. God's Story and Ours, with three topics:

With three topics: By Face, By Name, By Heart.

You will soon see for yourselves a blending, an overlay and dove-tailing of the theme and topics.

1.) **MAKE-OVER**

Pictures of St. Louise

First, let's have some fun!

You know, Louise, for such an incredible woman with a beautiful soul and gentle heart for the poor, artists certainly didn't do you any favors! Ironic, isn't it - that you were an artist!

The first thing we need to do before we share stories about you and our Vincentian Family is to give you a make-over! What do you say?!

Picture: Louise with basket

Just a few changes – a nip here and tuck there.

Slide: Now that's what I'm talking about – Outback Louise – just add a few accessories and she's good to go! We'll get back to you later.

Amazing isn't it Louise? Here you are a 17th century woman from Paris with a message for us centuries later in Australia! If you were here today in the Land Down Under, I am sure you would share a spiritual landscape from Deep Down Under in your soul.

Louise, what do you wish to say to us your family?

2.) **BY FACE** the first topic

SLIDE 1-2: Paula

Paula, a friend and former colleague in Campus Ministry, is presently a Vincentian Volunteer, serving the homeless with other young adults who have given a year of volunteer service. Her first email was bubbling with the freshness, excitement, and ideals of living her dream. She writes: “I pray and continue to pray that I, like Vincent and Louise, can take care of the poor... and know them by their names and faces.”

SLIDE 2-2: ...and know them by their names and faces.

I was moved by this, i.e., Paula’s spirited love for the poor and her deep desire to give all she can. But to remember names AND faces in a new setting? Personally, I would be hard pressed. (midlife or not!) For Paula, it was important that the homeless men be familiar, like family.

SLIDE 3-2: FAMily = FAMiliar

The notion of being known by one’s face – recognition by the unique lines and tones, it’s all there in the face – a wink, a tear, a smile, honoring every sort of expression imaginable.

SLIDE 3-2 A: Face of Christ

For Louise there’s more to it than simply being familiar, the poor person is the very place where she gazes on the Face of Christ.

SLIDE 4-2: Louise and Vincent (Artist: Ellen LaCapria, DC)

We gave Louise an outback make-over, but let’s look at yet another rendering of Louise.

CLICK Look closely at this one... This particular rendition is rich in meaning.

CLICK Look really close. Do you see them?

The shape of Louise’s brow, her cheek bone, the highlights, and shadows are all formed by these tiny faces. Faces loom up from no where, pass by, disappear...

Fascinating... what do they tell us about Louise?

(pause)

Who are they, Louise? Do tell!

Are they the poor? Carrying each precious one with you wherever you go? Introducing them to whomever you meet? Louise are you modeling for us how the poor were ever a part of you when you met, say, with people of prominence, the Bishop, the Queen? Did they observe the powerless tenderly etched in your brow? Did the poor find comfort and welcome when they recognized themselves in you?

Are they the people in your life that have formed you, made an impression on you, loved you? and you them? Your face hold a family portrait in a way.

SLIDE: Your face holds a family portrait.

Could our face hold the faces of all the people we've met, helped, and those who assisted us? May we recognize the truth like you, to see into the human nature and grace of the poor inside and outside of ourselves.

We might have been told we have our grandmothers smile or our father's eyes, but your features actually carry/hold the essence of the exhausted galley slave,

SLIDE: Boy on ground

the desperate mother, the infant left on the doorstep. As if to say, this person before my eyes, this person, this is enough. (The poor are always with you.)

The face of Christ and the faces of the poor are one and the same, it's true. Louise would also insist --- we are the face of Christ for others. "We bring Christ to one another and one another to Christ." (Mac Cauley)

SLIDE: Wrinkled woman

Louise believed that "all humanity hungers to see the face of God. As if to say: How is it possible to have never seen each other?"

How do we manifest God's face? The challenge for us is this: How can we reveal –and-receive even glimpses of God's face? 13th c. poet says it this way: "The eye with which I see is the same eye with which God sees me." Try that one on... Christ reveals not only the boundless love of God but also the incomparable value of every human being.

SLIDE: Black man

As you are well aware, in our global village, we are saturated with images of beauty and love, power and wealth, rich and famous, and we have created something we're not. "When we don't know that the sacred is available in our everyday lives, in every day faces it's very difficult to know ourselves as sacred. Sacred is nothing special. It's life, revealing its true nature. Life's true nature is wholeness. I know I belong here. I don't think about it, I simply feel it." (Margaret Wheatley). Having said that, I can hear Louise coaching us, reassuring us, saying yes! Now you understand!

SLIDE: Indian child

Our Faith, finds the sacred, the beauty and love in a God who takes the form of a dying deserted man on a cross, and in the ugly, undeniable poor. This is truly a scandalous idea: God irresistibly shines through utter poverty." Louise got it - she clearly understood and summed it up this way: The Love of Christ Crucified Impels us , the motto of the DC's. Or said another way...

SLIDE: 6-2: The Charity of Christ Crucified Urges Us

to go, go, go meet our God in the poor – now! Don't wait! Can't wait!

This is our hope, and our challenge in our respective corners of the world, to take in the sacred, the beauty and love of our poor and powerless God and then to let it become a part of us, let it shine from our faces, the way it does from Louise's.

SLIDE: OLD MAN

When I look at the world, I make immediate choices, instant appraisals. I like or dislike, accept or reject, according to its usefulness to me.

When on the other hand I see – suddenly I am all eyes, I forget this me and dive into the reality of what confronts me, become a part of it, participate in it.

Seeing is but an awareness, unwavering attention to the world of the poor, which is trying to catch our eye.

I have devised a way for you to remember Louise with an Australian twist. Let's give this topic some Australian flavor! I guarantee, you'll be the only people on the planet that can associate Louise seeking the Face of Christ with, yes, a Crocodile!

SLIDE 7-2: Outback Louise and Crocodile

Let me explain: The Croc has excellent eyesight. It actually has three eyelids – one of which is transparent for seeing underwater. When we encounter impoverished persons, we often look and stop at the surface. But we, like the croc, can use our third eyelid, and see below the surface to the human being, the heart of the matter - where we find God.

CLICK: Faces take us places

If Louise gave directives and she was very good about directives – detailed outlines, alphabetized lists, how to's, etc. If she gave directives on how to seek the Face of Christ in the poor, they may sound something like this:

SLIDE: Children with bread.

Initially, we might look at what's wrong, possibly responding with resistance, pity or fear to the externals. We might feel a little shy, awkward or vulnerable when we step out of our comfort zone. Or when we're too preoccupied, too busy to see, that's when the poor remind us of their presence.

SLIDE: Child with bowl

They're often dirty, and soiled, scarred or maimed, tattered and torn, with hungers and needs, trying to survive another day – just to live.

They may be having a good day or a bad day, just like us. They may be grateful or upset just like us. They may ask for nothing or demand more than we can give just like us.

We begin to notice that the stranger's face in front of us, isn't so strange.

When we exercise our transparent eyelid – the “God lens”, let's say – we look below the surface and something happens!

SLIDE: Indian woman

It's not necessarily what the eye sees, but that which wakes the eye, see, that is the spirit.

We see the truth about the poor, about God and about self.

This is key: A direct seeing into self: who we are in reality. For Louise, this insight into one self is the wisdom (that is) inseparable from compassion.

We meet person to person, heart to heart, wound to wound, healer to healer.

We see with clarity, 20/20 vision. Transformation kicks in – what happened? who changed? The face, the person in need, (who’s the person in need?) This is indeed the meeting place of God. We stand face to face with a human face – with oneself - in unwavering attention.

SLIDE: Man with hat

We are convinced -- What we see isn’t what we saw. How can this be? This encounter is a God Moment infused with infinite love and unbounded compassion but at times feeling more like a jarring wake up call.

In a distressing disguise, God waits for us to realize that, surprise! Our God is an awesome --and shabby God! Now what do we do? Things aren’t as they were.

Louise would suggest that we offer the poor all the dignity and love that is theirs in Christ: respond, reflect, receive, all with respect. Respect, coincidentally is Latin meaning “Look Again”.

SLIDE: Girl with beautiful eyes

It is interesting to note that this third eyelid is transparent, not translucent, not a one way mirror. It looks out and takes it all in. Transparency requires something of us – an honest, simple, exchange, as we are, with our own dirt, scars, hungers and needs. We meet person to person, face to face, looking through the “God lens” straight into the eyes of God who looks us in the eye.

In my country the poor are rendered invisible, among other things. We need Louise and her vision today.

SLIDE: Mentally challenged woman

She kept persons who are poor in view at all times – one eye on the poor, the other fixed on Jesus – it’s all the same to her – together, that’s a rich and full combination. It’s complete.

The needs of the poor have evolved over time and it is important to remember that we may not do what Louise did, but we need to **see what she saw**. The eye is meant to see ever more, ever deeper.

SLIDE: Black boy with spoon

Consider this: “I want to consciously look into the face of one of my brothers or sisters and reflect on what happens to me.” (McCormick) That’s it! It’s as simple as that. Give it a try.

If Louise were here today looking at us, she’d say you are the face of Christ and she’d be delighted at what she sees. It might look something like this...

DVD- Bill's Faces of People/Christ

3.) **SLIDE: BY NAME** The second topic

SLIDE 1-3: What's in a Name?

What's in her name you ask? By re-arranging the letters in "Louise", two significant words in English are formed: LOSE and SOUL. Imagine that?

SLIDE 2-3: LOSE and SOUL

The translation in other languages may not be as exact as the English.

Yet, the integrity of this rings true with Louise's life. I think you'll be amazed at how true.

Some members of our FAMVIN gathering are going to help me with the next part. My friends from St Johns University

While they're coming up here, I need your help too.

You all have a part too

Whenever I say GOOD NEWS I will prompt you to cheer, yeah! – let's try it...

Whenever I say BAD NEWS I will prompt you to sigh, ooooooh – let's try it...

(Very good!)

I am calling the next part, **The Stations of St. Louise**

SLIDE: The Stations of St. Louise.

Adopting the notion from the Stations of the Cross.

The following quote is taken from Louise's Spiritual Writings: "God who has granted me so many graces led me to understand that it was His holy will that I go to him by way of the cross. His goodness chose to mark me with it from my birth and he has hardly ever left me, at any age, without some occasion of suffering."

Having said that, Louise obviously was not your typical endearing optimistic Aussie who I have come to love!

1. **First station:** The birth of Louise De Marillac August 12, 1591

Louise: Blanket

Father: James

Mother: Melissa round white paper with ?

SLIDE: First Station: She Lives

GOOD NEWS: (CHEER) She Lives

We continue our regularly scheduled program to bring you this announcement – 417 years ago, a saint was born! Baby Louise (De Marillac). Louise, we sense your soft blushing grin from heaven today. I am sure you never thought you'd bear the title of Saint for all eternity. Heaven and earth rejoice at your birth, and your one wild and precious life. (m.oliver)

SLIDE: Did you ever have one of those days?

BAD NEWS: (SIGH) Louise never knew her mother. She's shrouded in mystery. When we look at the many faces in Louise's face that formed her, one striking, significant face is missing – that of her mother. There's no trace of her. Historians believe Louise was illegitimate. Also, Louise had delicate health due no doubt to the conditions in war torn France at the time of her birth (1591).

SLIDE: ABANDONED

HEARTBEAT DRUMMING
TEAR HEART

2. **Second Station:** Louise goes to school

Louise: Angela two pig tails/books

Louis/Father: James

Nun/Aunt: Melissa veil, cross

(Uncle: Melissa tie/hat maybe?)

SLIDE: She's Smart (Education)

GOOD NEWS: (CHEER)

Louise attended a private boarding school at the royal Monastery. Her aunt, a Dominican Nun lived at the monastery there. Louise received a fine education and encountered the arts and humanities, spirituality, philosophy, the use of herbs for medicine, the responsibility of the rich to the poor - a very refined and advanced education for her day.

Her days had routine, prayer, study,... routine prayer, study, ... etc. Louise's father provided educational opportunities that would cultivate her mind and he took every imaginable care to do so. Louise loved visits and conversation with her father. He loved them too. She was Daddy's little girl. A quote from her biography states: "Louise had been her father's greatest consolation in the world, and that he thought she had been given him by God for his peace of mind in the afflictions of life".

SLIDE: Did you ever have one of those days?

BAD NEWS: (SIGH)

Family funds were dwindling and Louise was moved to a simple, no frills boarding school where she acquired all the practical and hard working skills to run a household. There's no easy way to tell you this next loss: at age 12 Louise's beloved father dies. Louise's uncle Michel becomes her guardian.

SLIDE: ORPHANED

*HEARTBEAT DRUMMING
TEAR HEART*

3. **Third Station:** Louise's Relationship with God age 20

Louise: Angela with pony tail
Abbot: James priest collar, cross
Uncle: Melissa tie/hat

SLIDE: She Promises

GOOD NEWS: (CHEER)

Louise ardently desired to consecrate herself to God. She makes a promise/vow to God and resolves to become a contemplative nun. Maybe it was her aunt's influence at the private school – the place where she felt a sense of belonging. Obviously, Louise is trying to claim her life, find meaning, give some expression to her spiritual life – something we all eventually hope for.

SLIDE: Did you ever have one of those days?

BAD NEWS: (SIGH)

Louise is rejected. This is devastating news and her hopes are shattered. The Abbot did not think she could endure such an austere life, due to her frail health. Little did he know Louise would live almost 70 years! – well beyond the norm of women from her time -- so much for frailty.

Her uncle Michel attempts to console her and works toward finding a good husband for her.

SLIDE: REJECTED

*HEARTBEAT DRUMMING
TEAR HEART*

4. **Fourth Station:** Louise Marries Antoine at age 22

Louise: Angela (hair in bun)
Antoine/Husband: James
Michel/Son: Blanket

SLIDE: SHE MARRIES

GOOD NEWS: (CHEER)

Louise married Antoine LeGras.

They're a happy couple and a year later they have a son, Michel. Michel had some limitations, developmental difficulties. Louise loved serving the poor especially with

Antoine's family. She visited the sick of the parish as well as in the hospital. She attracted other ladies to serve by her example.

SLIDE: Did you ever have one of those days?

BAD NEWS: (SIGH)

Louise and Antoine are happily married but it did not mean happily ever after. A prolonged illness left Antoine miserable and moody. After four years, Antoine died. Louise was widowed at 34 years after 12 years of marriage. She was now a single mother raising her son – who was about the same age as Louise when her father died.

SLIDE: WIDOW/SINGLE MOM

HEARTBEAT DRUMMING

TEAR HEART

Now, the fifth station is about the Spirit - - everything seems to get turned around when the Spirit makes an appearance. So, I am going to turn things around and give you the bad news first:

5. **Fifth Station:** Louise Doubts at age 34

Louise: Angela veil, Paper in pocket

Husband: James tissues

Son: Melissa

SLIDE: She Doubts

BAD NEWS: (SIGH)

Louise is questioning, doubting and agonizing over her life. Her husband was sick, dying, and eventually died. She thought of it as punishment for not keeping her former promise to become a nun. Her son with his challenges and demands was a constant worry and concern. There was crisis, there was loss. Louise was distraught.

Louise has been profoundly marked by the dramatic, often traumatic events in her life. She suffered greatly because of the doubt she experienced. All these things caused her incredible anguish. Louise says of herself that she struggled to simplify the workings of her mind.

Would it surprise you if you heard Louise described in history as hypersensitive, neurotic, melancholy, worried about the past, tormented about the future, depressed, discouraged, etc. It makes me realize that on my terrible, awful no good days, I am in good company. I am in the company of a saint, a member of our Vincentian family, who knows exactly what it's like to have one of those days. Human experiences, particularly the painful ones, unite us even centuries later.

HEARTBEAT DRUMMING
TEAR HEART

SLIDE: But, Did you ever have one of those days?

SLIDE: SHE'S CONSOLED

GOOD NEWS: (CHEER)

Let there be light and there was light. Louise called this significant moment “Lumiere” in French or Light Experience. It happened on Pentecost 1623 (a time when we receive the Holy Spirit after Easter – after the suffering, after the crucifixion, after the death of Christ.) This is truly a graced moment, a consolation, a God moment for Louise. No worries! Shall we all breathe a sigh of relief, now?

All doubt is removed. Now this is a miracle in itself. Her doubts dissipated and she felt assured that one day she would be able to keep her promise and give herself to God as she desired.

As a reminder of the moment, this astounding grace, Louise carried her handwritten account of this Lumiere, this Light Experience throughout her life. The Holy Spirit is her dependable friend for life.

From this moment on, Louise also would never miss retreat between Ascension and Pentecost.

Louise set out in earnest on a spiritual journey toward total union with God. It was her second birth, maybe?

It important to remember that Louise is a highly intelligent and decisive woman with a practical sense and remarkable organizational ability, capable of conceiving and actualizing vast enterprises in minute detail. (She would have loved post it notes, paper clips, pocket folders, three ring binders with tabs)

As we begin the sixth station, I'll give you the bad news first again:

6. **Sixth Station:** Louise seeks Spiritual Direction

Louise: Angela veil

Vincent: James black beanie (Angela has it), priest collar

Bishop: Melissa Miter

SLIDE: SHE'S REPULSED

BAD NEWS: (SIGH) Louise who already had a love for the poor and who is no beginner in the spiritual life asks her friend the Bishop about a Spiritual Director – someone she could talk to about her relationship with God. The Bishop suggested Vincent. I am sure when Louise wrote about this in her spiritual journal some 400 years ago, she didn't expect it to be repeated today! Nonetheless, she writes: “It was repugnant to me to accept him (Vincent, as my director), nevertheless I acquiesced.” This “bad

news” makes me grin! In some way, I would wager Vincent enjoys it too. Imagine how the first impression is often the lasting one! Not so with Louise.

SLIDE: Did you ever have one of those days?

GOOD NEWS: (CHEERS) Let the friendship begin, one that would last 36 years! Vincent becomes her soul “MATE”! The friendship between these two widely differing personalities, proved to be of unbelievable significance to the Church and to the Poor. I share this Quote: “Many difficulties would have to be overcome, but both Vincent and Louise would soon become conscious of the need each had for the other as they combined their gifts of nature and grace, for a work as yet undefined, except in the mind of God, who knew that Vincentian works would, become what they were, because Louise De Marillac put her hand to them.”

SLIDE: FRIENDS

Together they literally revolutionized Paris providing education, offering healthcare, creating social services, etc. too numerous to name. They founded the Daughters of Charity – the first community of apostolic/active sisters -- breaking the traditional, contemplative way of Religious life. When reflecting on the extraordinary accomplishments of Vincent and Louise, it is easy to be dazzled by the extent to which they discovered and alleviated the misery of the poor. ADHD Hyperactivity

SLIDE: LOUISE – STATIONS OF THE CROSS

This brings the Stations to an end – Thanks to the generosity of our friends from St. Johns University –Campus Ministry!

And now you know the rest of the story... well, almost!

Louise, despite her physical frailty, this woman possessed seemingly limitless energy when confronted with the demands of the works for the poor or the needs of the Sisters.

What’s in a name? In Louise’s name - Paradox! Lots and lots of it! Lose and Soul, opposites and extremes, it must have been inscribed, not only in her name, but in every cell, ordinary and extraordinary, suffering and compassion, it’s who Louise is, body and spirit, giving and receiving, person of the poor and Face of Christ, there is no difference, pain and love, activist and mystic, sickness and health, now and not yet, death and life, etc. Louise’s life is proof that it’s all the same, it’s all one piece. Louise walks the line between extreme contradictions again and again. Somehow, in the midst of adversity, truth prevails – and so did she. That is the grace Louise continues to live in us. Paradox expressed another way: “In God I take refuge – the God who meets me in the ghettos and gardens of the world and says to me: You and I must build a bridge.” (Rose Agnes MacCauley)

Once again I have devised yet another Australian Twist to remember Louise and all that's in her Name.

SLIDE 21-3: Outback Louise, and Kangaroo

This time it's the Kangaroo! The kangaroo is known for its strength, decisiveness, speed, and instinct to access obstacles and avoid predators. One fascinating feature about the Kangaroo is that it cannot step backward, it only moves forward.

CLICK: You walk the talk

When we reflect on Louise's life of suffering, and loss, soul and spirit, we find she's the Queen of the Kangaroo! On her journey, Louise kept moving forward, over some rugged terrain, losing her balance every now and then, but moving forward instinctively, intuitively, gaining strength, decisiveness and healing with each step forward. Her life journeyed a labyrinth of paradox.

"My mind is on fire to understand this most intricate riddle." says St. Augustine -- and I don't know about you but so is mine!

SLIDE: CHART

Louise how is it

Abandoned STEP	Administrator, and teacher, nurse, social worker in one. Louise, (we pray,) be with us as we respond to the needs of our time.
Orphaned STEP	Organizer par excellence. Louise, (we pray,) enable us to appreciate our unique gifts.
Rejection STEP	Radical thinker, risk taker Louise, (we pray,) challenge us to find new solutions to old problems. Moved beyond limits
Widowed STEP	Industrious Worker. Louise, (we pray,) teach us to work with zeal for God's people.
Single Mother STEP	Seeker of Spiritual Direction Louise, (we pray,) urge us to seek guidance on our spiritual journey.
Because of Or despite your Doubt	STEP (You founded...) Founded the Daughters of Charity Louise, (we pray,) encourage us to proclaim who we are meant to be.

In the final analysis, Louise grasped Christ as the model for the truth of how God is in the world, as well as for **the deepest truth of who we are beneath our brokenness**.

With the agility and speed of the kangaroo, Louise desired her God, and ran to her poor, with exactness. In time, her suffering and losses, enlivened with the Spirit, became the impetus that moved her forward, transcending herself and moved her to recognize that the paradox of human suffering and loss, finds meaning in a tattered beating heart sheltered in the soul of Christ.

This quote from Ephesians: May you know the Breadth and Length and Height and Depth of Christ's love – This is comforting to me, a feel good reading. God's love is all encompassing, enveloping, expanding – Recently, at prayer one morning, I thought of it through the life of Louise and received an entirely new meaning

SLIDE: May you know the Breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's Love for you. The cross and love are one.

Pause.

HEARTBEAT DRUMMING

4.) *SLIDE:* **BY HEART** – The Third Topic

Periodically, we've heard the drumming of the heartbeat, and we have created Louise's heart – inseparable from the cross. Cross inseparable from heart.

This last topic is really about relationship - when you know your/you're friends and family by heart. You may have heard the expression: "By Heart": It has a connotation to know by memory.

But let's think a minute... To literally know by heart, has little to do with memorization – rather, it's something intuitive, there's a certain special feeling, a knowing, a passion. Something impels us, urges us, presses us to CHOOSE LOVE. (easier said than done! That would be a topic for our next FAMVIN!)

SLIDE: CHOOSE LOVE it's a choice not a feeling.

In regard to family and friends, you know you belong. It's where you belong, the place where you can be your true self. It's relational, giving and receiving. By heart, is actually a stance of discernment.

In regard to Louise, she ultimately belongs to each of us and all those who struggle with their own brokenness and limitations amid the demands of life. And Louise has much to teach us about the **enduring gift of love**.

Before I share a family story, I have one final Australian twist associating Outback Louise, by heart, with the cute Koala!

SLIDE: OUTBACK LOUISE and KOALA

One commonality of the Koala to us is: the Koala is nocturnal and comes to life at night - much like the young adults I know!

CLICK: You're in touch!

Aside from that, the koala leaves fingerprints behind. (*rub fingers*) If you're living by heart you will be "**in touch**". Especially in your relationship with God, others/poor, self. The fingerprint is inevitably personal, original. We, like the koala, can leave our fingerprints on the world, and touch the lives of the poor. It excites me to imagine the endless possibilities to this.

SLIDE: Smiling girl

More importantly, we allow the poor to leave their mark all over us! And touch our hearts too.

As far as I can tell, the koala basically eats and sleeps. Similarly, we need to take care of ourselves daily – aware of what we need. The well being of the sisters was Louise's primary concern. Louise would often give advice to the sisters about health. She also would chide Vincent: "You would recover more quickly from that cold if you went to bed earlier." Simply stated: Be more like the Koala!

With all of the sleep the Koala gets, I am reminded of dreams. Dreamtime is very significant in Australia. The Aboriginal Creation Myth, where legendary (totem) ancestral beings sang the world into existence, believed all things begin with Dreamtime. The infinite spiritual cycle called the dreamtime is more real than reality itself. That's worth thinking about.

SLIDE: Farmer

Think about this in reference to the poor: Dreams repair and mend. And this: Whatever we do not love becomes fertile ground for a dream. Or this: Dreams take you somewhere so you can find something and someone.

Louise's own journey to the poor sheds light on the vast and varied hopes and dreams and possibilities of a deeper response to the suffering and isolation of the poor and vulnerable today. Throughout her life, Louise meditated on the humanity of Jesus and then lived as he lived, related as he related. The heart of Jesus's ministry was the heart of hers.

SLIDE: Woman smiling, fence

Serving the poor was not simple human generosity; it expressed **God's life** in the world. Louise's life calls us to show forth the truth that Jesus revealed to us -- to be the unqualified love of God for all.

Louise, through the metaphors of the Koala and Dreamtime remind us --take care of yourself so that you can take good care of the poor, dream large, and live your life by heart. Sing the world of the poor into a new existence. And leave lots of fingerprints behind.

SLIDE: A FAMILY STORY

Now for a story. There is a family story I'd like to share. I think you'll agree in no time, that this love story, yet another love story, between father and son has everything in common with Louise's life of loss, soul and the face of Christ in the poor. This story models, epitomizes, what it means to be a member of FAMVIN: A culmination of Louise's Eye Seeing Croc, sure footed Roo and Dreaming Koala. It is an exceptional living metaphor that identifies succinctly with the prevalence and providence of God's love thriving in the paradox of human frailty.

The father and son in this story are not related to me - and yet, they are. They may have never heard of FAMVIN yet they're here with us. They probably don't know St. Louise yet they breathe the same spirit. I've never met them, yet their faces are familiar. I was never introduced to them, yet I know their name. I share this quote: "Wherever I may be, I meet him. He is no other than myself. Yet, I am not he." Something to ponder....

This love story sings into existence Rick Hoyt, born brain damaged and unable to control his arms and legs.

Doctors told Rick's parents Dick and Judy Hoyt, "He'll be a vegetable the rest of his life, put him in an institution." But the Hoyts noticed the way Rick's eyes followed them around the room. When Rick was 11 they took him to a Medical University and asked if there was anything to help the boy communicate. "No way" Dick said he was told. "There's nothing going on in his brain".

"Tell him a joke" Dick countered. They did. Rick laughed. It turns out a lot was going on in his brain. So they rigged up a computer that allowed Rick to control the cursor by touching a switch with the side of his head. Rick was finally able to communicate. His first words were "Go Bruins" -- a cheer for the local Hockey team!

A few years later, after a high school classmate was paralyzed in an accident, the School organized a 5 mile (8 kilometer) Charity Run for the injured student. Rick communicated, "Dad I want to do that". How was Dick, who never ran more than a mile at a time, going to push his son 5 miles (8 km)? Still, He tried. That day changed Rick's life. "Dad" he typed, "When we were running, it felt like I wasn't disabled anymore!"

SLIDE: That day changed Rick's life. When we were running, it felt like I wasn't disabled anymore!"

That sentence changed Dick's life. He became obsessed with giving Rick that feeling as often as he could. He got into such good shape that he and Rick ran a 26 mile (about 41 kilometer) Marathon. Then someone said, "Hey, why not a triathlon?" Dick retorted, "How's a guy who never learned to swim and hadn't ridden a bike since he was six going to haul his 110 pound (50 kilogram) kid through a triathlon?" Still, Dick tried.

To date they've completed 212 triathlons, including four grueling 15 hour Ironman Races. Dick does it purely for the awesome feeling he gets seeing Rick with a cantaloupe smile as they run, swim and ride together.

This year at ages 65 and 43 Dick and Rick finished a (26 mile/41 km) Marathon in 5,083 place out of more than 20,000. "No question about it, Rick types, "My Dad is the Father of the Century". Truly, their relationship is an exchange of love. When I see how they live their life by heart, it speaks of the passion and compassion of Louise and Vincent. I hope it speaks to you too.

Again, I share this quote: "Wherever I may be, I meet him. He is no other than myself. Yet I am not he."

And now for the video... (*Videos of Team Hoyt are available on You Tube*).

When the video ends I will give us a silent moment to transition.

<http://www.teamhoyt.com/>

In conclusion, Louise's final words to us

SLIDE: Outback Louise, Crocodile, Kangaroo and Koala in jeep

Get in the jeep!

St. Louise DeMarillac -- Reflection Questions

Be creative, use a symbol, draw, write, try a poem...

1. St. Louise is trying to get in touch with you, but she can't reach you because you are attending a FAMVIN Celebration. She has a special and very distinct message, especially for you. What would she say to you?
2. You have some thoughts and questions that you want to ask St Louise. She gladly accepts your invitation to meet you at your favorite place. Where would that be, and what would you like to ask her? How would she respond?
3. As a member of FAMVIN, describe your larger than life, positively brilliant, absolutely amazing, wonderfully colorful dreams. Where would you like to leave your fingerprints?