

# Vinspiration

## St Louise de Marillac

### About Louise...



Louise was born on 12 August, 1591. She was the illegitimate daughter of Louis de Marillac. As an infant she was placed in a Dominican convent school at Poissy. She was immersed in Dominican and mystical spirituality. At the age of 12 Louise's father died and her uncle Michel de Marillac becomes her guardian. He arranged the marriage of Louise to Antoine le Gras at the age of 22. A son, Michel Antoine, was born to them.

During her marriage Louise had a significant spiritual experience on the feast of Pentecost in St Nicolas des Champs Church. Louise had doubts about whether she should be married or committed to religious vows. It became clear to her during this experience that she should remain with her husband and son, and that there would be a time in the future when she would be able to make vows, be of service to her neighbour and live in community.

Seven years into their marriage, Antoine became ill and died 2 years later. Bishop Camus, Louise's spiritual director, appointed St Vincent de Paul as her new spiritual director. Vincent was reluctant to take on Louise as he was in the process of forming the Congregation of the Mission and the Confraternities of Charity. Gradually they both realised that God had brought them together and from which a beautiful friendship developed.

Louise and Vincent worked together to establish the Daughters of Charity on November 29, 1633, a community of lay women taking simple and private vows one year at a time. Their first mission was to serve the sick poor in the parishes of Paris before spreading to over 90 countries worldwide, and becoming involved in a variety of missions. Louise died on 15 March, 1660, six months before Vincent.



Louise's Feast Day is 15th March

Louise was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1934.

She was made Patroness of Social Workers by Pope John XXIII in 1960.

### Writings of St Louise de Marillac

Do not be upset if things are not as you would want them to be for a long time to come. Do the little you can very peacefully and calmly so as to allow room for the guidance of God in your lives. Do not worry about the rest.  
*(Writings, pp.614-15)*

Above all, be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care.  
*(Writings, pp.320-21)*

As for your conduct toward the sick, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection, serving them from the heart; inquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately.  
*(Writings, p.773)*

Gentleness, cordiality and forbearance must be the practices of the Daughters of Charity just as humility, simplicity and the love of the holy humanity of Jesus Christ, who is perfect charity, is their spirit.  
*(Writings, p.406)*

It is not enough to visit the poor and to provide for their needs; one's heart must be totally purged of all self-interest... In order to do this, my dear Sisters, we must continually have before our eyes our model, the exemplary life of Jesus Christ.  
*(Writings, pp.260-61)*

May my life be solely for Jesus and my neighbour so that, by means of this unifying love, I may love all that Jesus loves...  
*(Writings, p.786)*

You have every reason to trust in God and to abandon yourself to His Divine Providence. God will never fail to let you know how agreeable this manner of acting is to Him.  
*(Writings, p.354)*

I must have great trust in God and believe that His grace will be sufficient to enable me to fulfil his holy will, however difficult it may appear to be.  
*(Writings, p.176)*

Our vocation of servants of the poor calls us to practice the gentleness, humility, and forbearance that we owe to others. We must respect and honour everyone: the poor because they are the members of Jesus Christ and our masters; the rich so that they will provide us with the means to do good for the poor.  
*(Writings, p.468)*

## The Daughters of Charity

While Vincent was preaching a mission in 1630, a peasant woman of about 32 years of age, Marguerite Naseau came to him asking to serve poor people. So he sent her to Louise who directed her to work for the Ladies of Charity in the parish of St Sauveur, Paris. Marguerite's example inspired other women to join her.



Louise knew that these women would need a strong formation, based in prayer, in order to persevere in their service. She was convinced that a community dedicated to the service of the poor, abandoned, orphaned, sick and illiterate people had to be formed.

The Company of the Daughters of Charity was formed on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1633. Louise and Vincent were partners in dramatically changing religious life because up to this point, religious women had been confined to cloistered convents.

Louise encouraged the Daughters of Charity in their mission to look after the poor; in community to have a sense of unity, loving support; and to develop a strong prayer life so that they place their trust only in God, and acknowledge Mary as their Mother too.

Love of Christ urged Louise to go to the poor, in all their states of poverty. From this developed a motto for Louise and the Community: "The charity of Christ urges us".



### Did you know?

The Daughters of Charity are not "nuns," but "Sisters" - apostolic religious women who belong to a community, society or company. Vincent de Paul told the Daughters of Charity that they were not nuns, because nuns remained cloistered, and the Sisters' work was to serve the poor in their homes, hospitals, orphanages, or wherever they were to be found. The Sisters were to be "in the world but not of the world." Saints Louise and Vincent told the early Daughters of Charity: *"You will have for your chapel, the parish church, for your cloister, the streets of the city, or hospital wards, for your grate, the fear of God; for your veil, holy modesty; for your grille, holy obedience."*

<http://www.thedaughtersofcharity.org/>

## Something to think about...

Reflect on the questions below ... share your thoughts with others ... or take some time to write down your thoughts and offer them to God.

- What is the name God calls me?
- Who is the person I think God made me to be?
- What is the Holy Spirit moving me toward?
- How do I imitate Jesus in the way I interact with co-workers, my family, strangers, enemies?
- How could I be more fully the hands, ears, heart, and voice of Jesus?
- Who are the poor around me? Who are the "sick", the "imprisoned", those who need "clothes"?
- How do I reflect gentleness and compassion in my dealings with poor people, sick people or people I find unattractive?
- Are there ways in which I place more trust in possessions than I do in God?
- How do I help others recognise God's goodness?
- What do I pray about? Do I pray in good times as well as in bad times? Do I open my heart to God about my experiences?
- Is there a group or activity in my parish, family or local community to which I could contribute my time, talents, and energy?
- What experiences in my life have reminded me of my common humanity with other fallible, needy, vulnerable people? How do I respond in each instance?
- Is there a situation in my life right now that I find humbling? What attitude can I bring to this situation so that it could become freeing and empowering for me?

Louise de Marillac was a wife, mother, widow, teacher, nurse, social worker and founder. She was an organiser, a radical thinker who lived her life intensely and enthusiastically, and a woman whose quest in life was to do the will of God with a deep faith in divine providence. Louise knew suffering, but she also knew love. Through this suffering and love she became a mystic in action.



## Let us Pray ...

God, source of all love, through your Son, Jesus, you gave a new commandment of love to us. May we follow the example of Louise, to practise your love on earth so that we may obtain your kingdom promised to your faithful servants. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



[www.filles-de-la-charite.org](http://www.filles-de-la-charite.org)  
[www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org)  
[www.secretariadojmv.org](http://www.secretariadojmv.org)  
<http://www.thedaughtersofcharity.org/>

## Web Resources

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