The providential event of Pentecost 1642 demonstrated God’s love and protection of the Daughters of Charity and strengthened Louise in her mission. The year 1643 began with Vincent’s famous conference on “Imitating the Conduct of Country Girls.” The evening of the conference, Louise thanked Vincent for it: “I hope our sisters will make good use of the instruction your charity gave us today. Their hearts are filled with the desire to do this and they would really like to remember it forever. This causes me to entreat you most humbly to send us the little memorandum of the points you had in it. It seems to me this would help me recall a large part of what our good God said to us through your mouth.”  

After having received the outline of the conference, Louise carefully reconstructed the text, highlighting each virtue necessary for a Daughter of Charity through these words:

The spirit of true village girls is extremely simple—no slyness, nor words of double meaning; they’re not opinionated nor obstinate because in their simplicity they believe quite simply what they’re told. Daughters of Charity should be like that … not attached to your own ideas, but accepting of those of others; if you’re candid in your speech, and if your hearts aren’t thinking one thing while your lips say another….

True country women are noted for their great humility; they don’t boast of what they have, don’t talk about their relatives, and don’t think they’re clever, but act in a straightforward manner. And even though some have more than others, they don’t put on airs but live just like everyone else.…

[For] true Daughters of Charity … your only concern is the service of the poor.”

Louise had a definite role model in mind for the Daughters, writing, “If you want to be true Daughters of Charity, you should take the example of the Blessed Virgin.”

In June 1643, a sister working in a parish asked for a copy of the “practices observed in the [mother]house.” Until this point, no rule had been written
for the community. This request led the founders to ask themselves whether the time had come to do so. At the beginning of her transcription of the conference of 14 June 1643, Louise noted: “Most Honored Father had not yet made up his mind whether to have a written text; from this we have reason to believe that Divine Providence has reserved to itself the guidance of this work, which it advances and holds back, according to its pleasure.”

Vincent was aware that “works pertaining to the service of God come to an end ordinarily with those who begin them, if there is no spiritual bond among the persons involved in them.” He finally agreed to write a Rule for the Daughters of Charity and submit it to the archbishop of Paris for his approval.

Louise was happy with this decision but realistic about potential difficulties in obtaining the approval. Would the Church agree to recognize this new type of “secular” confraternity of servants of the poor? Wasn’t there a risk of the community facing the same fate as the Visitandines: namely, the imposition of the cloister? If the archbishop of Paris refused to allow women consecrated to God “to come and go” in the streets and villages, how could their service of the poor continue?

On the other hand, the Church’s official recognition was necessary for the continuance of the Company, so Louise thought of undertaking a pilgrimage to Chartres to ask for the help of Our Lady. She explained the goal of her
journey to Vincent, who was absent from Paris at the time: “I beg you most humbly to allow me to make a pilgrimage to Chartres during your absence so that I may entrust all our needs and the suggestions I have made to you to the care of the Blessed Virgin. The time has surely come for me to reflect on myself in the sight of God. I must tell you that I am convinced that the good of our little Company requires it.”

In October 1644, Louise set out on the journey and arrived in Chartres on Friday, 14 October. On Saturday, she went to the cathedral to pray to Our Lady. On Monday, she solemnly confided the burgeoning company to Mary, the humble servant of the Lord, and asked her to become its mother so that it could maintain the mission God had confided to it.

In taking this step, Louise was motivated by her profound desire to be faithful to God’s will by continuing the service of poor persons that he had confided to the Company. Louise saw in Mary the example of a woman who, in the face of many difficulties, had adhered fully to the plan of God throughout her life: “May your beautiful soul be forever triumphant, elect among millions, because of your faithful accomplishment of the designs of God.”

Louise’s account of the consecration of the Company to Mary expresses the motivations for the choice of Mary as mother and guardian of the Company:

On Monday, Feast of the Dedication of the Church of Chartres, I offered to God the designs of His Providence on the Company of the Daughters of Charity. I offered the said Company entirely to Him, asking Him to destroy it rather than let it be established contrary to His holy will. I asked for it, through the prayers of the Holy Virgin, Mother and Guardian of the said Company, the purity of which it stands in need. Looking upon the Blessed Virgin as the fulfillment of the promises of God to mankind, and seeing the fulfillment of the vow of the Blessed Virgin in the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation, I asked Him for the grace of fidelity for the Company through the merits of the Blood of the Son of God and of Mary. I prayed also that He might be the strong and loving bond that unites the hearts of all the sisters in imitation of the union of the three Divine Persons.

Louise saw God’s plans for the Company as the fulfillment of his promises to humanity. Mary played an essential role in the mysteries of the Incarnation
and Redemption. It was Mary who gave Christ his human life, that life which would be delivered up for the salvation of humanity; it was Mary who gave him his blood, that blood which he would pour out on Calvary:

Most Holy Virgin, have pity on all souls redeemed by the Son of God, your Son, Jesus Christ. Offer to the Divine Justice your pure body which furnished the blood which He shed for our Redemption so that His merits may be applied to the souls of the dying and effect in them complete conversion. Procure for us, through your intercession, all that we need to give glory to God in the fullness of heavenly beatitude and to enjoy the blessedness which your dear presence imparts to the saints who are now with you in glory.207

Louise asked Mary to grant the Company fidelity to the vocation God had confided to it. She admired Mary’s complete adherence to God’s design; the Incarnation of the Word and, consequently, the Redemption of humanity depended on her saying “yes.” Louise also required of all the Daughters of Charity this same adherence to God’s will manifested in their vocation and this same availability to serve suffering humanity, so they would be the humble servants of Christ in the poor.

Mary also participated in a privileged manner in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Louise delighted in glorifying her with her titles of “beloved Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, and worthy Spouse of the Holy Spirit.”208 As Louise wrote, “Throughout my life, in time and in eternity, I desire to love and to honor her to the best of my ability by my gratitude to the Blessed Trinity for the choice made of the Holy Virgin to be so closely united to the Divinity. I wish to honor the three Persons separately and also together in the unity of the divine essence.”209 Louise asked Mary to animate the life in the community so that it would resemble the relationship of the persons of the Trinity.

In the purity of her love, Mary had placed no obstacle between herself and God. Louise asked the Company to make its love of God as pure as Mary’s, so that it could be just as faithful to the mission it had received. By accepting her indispensable role in the Incarnation of the second person of the Blessed Trinity, Mary also committed herself to participating in the salvific mission of her son. Thus, in faith, she also agreed to follow him in his suffering. This first “yes” of Mary was followed by many others. Mary advanced step by step in the understanding and accomplishment of her mission. Louise recognized how
much Mary had immersed herself in the mystery of the Redeemer: “Your dear Son, my Redeemer, is the source of the heroic virtue of which you gave the example during your life on earth.”

On Calvary, Mary welcomed the words of her dying Son, extending her motherhood to the beloved disciple John, to the Church, and to all humanity. In his encyclical, “The Mother of the Redeemer,” Saint John Paul II noted: “Mary’s motherhood of the human race … emerges from the definitive accomplishment of the Redeemer’s Paschal Mystery.” Louise admired how Mary had made herself totally available for her new mission toward all those whom her Son had confided to her from the cross: “the Blessed Virgin accept[ed] to be deprived of her Son and remain[ed] on earth for the good of Christians.”

Mary brought to humanity all her womanly tenderness, and all her motherly kindness. According to Louise, “Everything is comprised in her title of Mother of the Son of God. How admirable are her deeds! With good reason the Church addresses her as the Mother of Mercy.”

Mercy has its source in a mother’s heart and womb as a manifestation of a love that is faithful and full of care and compassion. Meditating on these virtues of Mary, Louise reflected on the following:

Her complete detachment and the sweet tranquility of her soul during the passion and death of her Son.

Her renunciation of all things and her willingness to remain on earth after the Ascension of her Son because of her pure love of God and her zeal for the salvation of souls, for which she labored for the remainder of her life, thereby
In establishing Mary as mother of the Company, Louise asked her to guide each sister and the entire Company toward the full acceptance of the vocation that is given to them. She asked her to direct each sister and the entire Company toward the recognition of Christ in all those they meet. Louise confided to Mary’s care and guidance this corporal and spiritual service of the poor, and this humble participation in the loving mystery of the Redemption. For each Daughter of Charity and for the entire Company, to accomplish the design of God means to live as a humble servant dedicated to God for the liberation and salvation of the poor whom Christ loves with a preferential love.

On her return to Paris, Louise continued to work with Vincent on the petition that would be submitted to Jean-François de Gondi, the archbishop of Paris, around September 1645.
THE HOLY FAMILY.
A PAINTING SAID TO HAVE BEEN DONE BY LOUISE DE MARILLAC. IT WAS USED BY VINCENT FOR PART OF THE FRONTISPIECE OF THE VINCENTIAN COMMON RULES; ORIGINAL IN THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY MOTHERHOUSE, PARIS.

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HOLY CARD
PICTURING LOUISE DE MARILLAC, THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY, MARY, AND THE INFANT JESUS.

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