

7-2002

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Recommended Citation

Charpy, Elisabeth D.C. (2002) "Louise de Marillac: Animator of the Confraternities of Charity," *Vincentiana*: Vol. 46: No. 4, Article 23.

Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol46/iss4/23>

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Louise de Marillac
Animator of the Confraternities of Charity

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19.VII.2002

In 1625, when Vincent de Paul accepted the spiritual direction of Mademoiselle Le Gras, born Louise de Marillac, could he imagine the place she would take in his life? I do not think so, for during this time she appeared to him as a worried and scrupulous woman. Mademoiselle Le Gras needed to meet with her spiritual director often. She did not handle well his absences from Paris. This woman had a painful past: she did not know who her mother was, the de Marillac family had marginalized this illegitimately-born child; Louise later married even though she wanted to become a religious; from December 1625, she was a widow with the responsibility of a 12 year-old child.

It would take Monsieur Vincent several years to discover the true personality of Louise de Marillac. She had been distressed by the illness and death of her husband, believing that God was punishing her for not having been faithful to the promise she made to become a religious. But, little by little, she would once again find balance. Vincent counselled her and involved her in working for the poor. Then, as time went on, he saw the depth of the spiritual life of his directee, her ease of contact with those she met, her kindness and also her quick understanding of situations as well as her sense of organization.

1. First commitment

In May 1629, Vincent de Paul made a request of Louise de Marillac. Would she accept going to Montmirail to visit the Confraternities of Charity established in that town and the neighboring villages? This request left Louise completely free in her response:

Father de Gondi sent me word to come by coach to see him in Montmirail. [...] Do you feel like coming, Mademoiselle? If so, you would have to leave next Wednesday on the coach to Châlons [...] And we shall have the happiness of seeing you in Montmirail.¹

After a short reflection, Louise acquiesced to the request of her director. With her son boarding at the School of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, her time was her own. Was Monsieur Vincent aware that Louise would accept a commitment

¹ Coste, Vol. 1, Letter 38 - To Saint Louise, April-May 1629, p. 63.

that would take her far, very far? Probably, for it was truly a “sending on Mission” that he addressed to her for her journey.

I am sending you the letters and the report that you need for your journey.

Go, therefore, Mademoiselle, go in the name of Our Lord.

I pray that His Divine Goodness may accompany you,

Be your consolation along the way,

Your shade against the heat of the sun,

Your shelter in rain and cold,

Your soft bed in your weariness,

Your strength in your toil,

And, finally, that He may bring you back in perfect health and filled with good works.²

Following this first journey, Vincent asked Louise de Marillac to visit the different Confraternities of Charity established in the Ile de France region around Paris, but also Confraternities a bit further away like Montmirail. A study of Vincent de Paul’s letters to Louise de Marillac indicates that from this date forward the tone of the letters changes. The terms used were no longer “my daughter,” but “Mademoiselle.” Vincent no longer addresses her as a directee but as a collaborator. Louise became the Visitatrice of the Confraternities of Charity.

2. Visits to the Confraternities of Charity

Louise was 38 years of age when Vincent de Paul chose her as his collaborator for the work of the Confraternities of Charity. A petit, energetic and quick woman, Louise was never in good health but this would not deter her from travelling. As often as possible, it was Monsieur Vincent who sent her or he communicated the requests of the Ladies of Charity to her.

The reasons for being sent were numerous: encourage the members of the Confraternity, resolve difficulties in numerous areas, restart Charities that were not going well, like Villeneuve Saint George or assist in starting Confraternities like Beauvais and Liancourt.

2.1. Preparing for a Visit

Every visit required preparation: physical preparation and spiritual preparation.

² *Ibid.*, Letter 39. – To Saint Louise, 6 May 1629, pp. 64-65.

As often as possible, Confraternities were established at the close of a Mission preached by Monsieur Vincent or the Vincentian Priests. The place was known, the customs of the people and the parish priest often influenced the running of the Confraternity. Louise enjoyed receiving information from Monsieur or his confreres that would assist her in her travels.

Before every departure, Louise would participate in the Eucharist and confide her visit to the Lord of Charity. Receiving her Lord in Communion strengthened her. In December 1629, before leaving for Asnières, she put her feelings in writing:

On Ember Wednesday preceding Christmas, I left for Asnières. I was fearful of making this trip because of my ailments, but the thought of the obedience which was sending me on this trip strengthened me considerably. At Holy Communion, on that day, I was moved to make an act of faith....³

The mission that had been confided to her was lived like a journey of faith. She was aware of being sent for a greater good. The following 5 February (1630) during the Eucharist, Louise de Marillac was led to a deepening of the meaning of her mission:

At the moment of Holy Communion, it seemed to me that Our Lord inspired me to receive Him as the Spouse of my soul and that this Communion was a manner of espousal.⁴

On this anniversary of her marriage to Antoine Le Gras, husband chosen by her family, Louise received from God “*the spouse of my soul,*” and the communion of the Body of Christ sealed this union that invited her to leave all in order to follow her spouse. She continues in her account:

I felt myself more closely united to Him by this consideration which was extraordinary for me. I also felt moved to leave everything to follow my Spouse; to look upon Him as such in the future; and to bear with the difficulties I might encounter as part of the community of His goods.⁵

Louise felt called to live “as part of the community of the Lord’s goods.” Like him, she was now dedicated to the members of the Body of Christ, like him she would have to bear life’s difficulties. From this astonishing light, she could read again the Gospel of Matthew: *What you did for the least of these little ones,*

³ *Spiritual Writings*, A. 50 - Visits to the Confraternities of Asnières and Saint-Cloud, p. 704.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 704.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 705.

you did unto me. Louise received this grace of a “*mystical marriage*” within an act of poverty, wanting to be totally dependant on God in “the missionary activity that she was undertaking.”⁶

This understanding of the meaning of the mission received would deepen within Louise throughout the years. She would endeavour to share it with all with whom she worked. She would explain to the Daughters of Charity that every mission received from God was for his glory and the benefit of the poor:

*First and foremost, they must remember to keep in mind God and his glory. Then they must consider the welfare of the people with whom they will be associated in order to serve them better according to their aptitudes. [...] Above all, they shall be aware of crediting to themselves the least portion of the works in which God does us the honor of employing us. This can come about through vain complacency, satisfaction, or self-serving plans; all things which we must renounce often.*⁷

For Louise, any mission close to the suffering members of Christ was not “*a personal matter.*” This mission was to be lived together, as Church. Asking advice, verifying what was said, what was done, was a necessity for Louise. The mission did not belong to her.

2.2. The Journey

Louise de Marillac used the usual means of transportation for her travels. Shorter distances were more often done on foot (in the 17th century, 10 or 15 kilometres did not deter people) or on horseback. For longer journeys, it was a coach, an uncomfortable vehicle with stops at coach inns (places where the horses rested). Louise found promiscuity within these inns. She also noticed the high price of the meals. Her experience would serve her for advising the Daughters of Charity when leaving on a journey:

*When they arrive, they shall ask the innkeeper’s wife to provide them with a small room so they can sleep separately from the others. [...] Since bread is usually more expensive at an inn, they would be well advised to buy a good quantity from a baker so as to meet their needs.*⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 705.

⁷ *Ibid.*, A. 85 – Instructions to the Sisters who were sent to Montreuil, p. 770.

⁸ *Ibid.*, A. 77 – Practices which our Sisters should observe when traveling to their Foundations, p. 731.

All along the journey, Louise de Marillac had the habit of sending her guardian angel to greet the Master in the tabernacle whenever she saw a Church bell tower. The sisters maintained her simple prayer:

O, my dear Angel, go, I beg you, to Jesus. Tell the Divine Saviour that I adore him, that I love him with all my heart. Invite this adorable prisoner of love to come into my heart, and abide there. This heart is too small to contain such a great king, but I want it to grow larger through love and faith.

Each and every journey of Louise had a time for reading, discussions with one's neighbor, and there were times when sleep would take priority.

2.3. The Visit

Upon arrival, Louise would need to find lodgings. It seems that she wanted to maintain her freedom for she rarely stayed at the Confraternity President's home or that of any of the members. She would go to an inn as at Neufville or Pont-Sainte-Maxence, or stay with a private individual — with Monsieur Ricard in Beauvais, with Monsieur Caille, the baker at Verneuil.

The visit was done in two complementary stages: Louise would take the time and means to determine the life and functioning of the Confraternity and then endeavour to infuse it with new energy. It was through meetings with the members of the Confraternity and home visits to the poor that Louise would perceive what was being done and how things were being lived out. Her sense of observation and discernment served her well. Her competence in numerous areas allowed her to give specific responses.

All of the women involved in the Confraternity of their town were full of good intentions, but relational problems, differing views on how to serve the poor, and questions concerning who should be served by the Confraternity quickly arose. Louise listened attentively. The accounts of the visits are very precise.

a. Relational problems

These were common and first concerned those in charge within the Confraternity:

There seems to be cordiality among the Ladies although some of them sometimes criticize the behavior of the Officers.⁹

⁹ *Ibid.*, A. 53, Notes on the Visits to the Confraternities, p. 721.

Among the officers of the Confraternity is the *Treasurer* who is responsible for stewardship. Every day she gives the money needed to buy food to the one preparing the meals. There was an interpersonal problem with the Treasurer at Verneuil who was deemed too authoritarian:

*They complain that the Treasurer is a difficult character who does not easily accept the advice of others.*¹⁰

At Sannois, the Treasurer, filled with good intentions, wanted to do everything herself. The result being that the other women of the Confraternity no longer felt concerned:

*The Ladies of the Charity have let their zeal cool a bit. Often they do not visit the sick on the days for which they are responsible because the Treasurer is so good-hearted that she cooks the food for those who should be doing it that day.*¹¹

Louise needed a great deal of tact in order for the Treasurers to understand their role and find a balance between being too rigid and too good-hearted. The activities of one should not become a difficulty in the activities of the others. One must know how to stand back and let the others work.

The *Procurator*¹² was at times contested, but the women dared not say anything to this gentleman responsible for the management of the goods of the Association:

*In Fraconville, the Procurator of the Charity has lent money to twenty-five persons with no guarantee of repayment. He seemed disposed to continue this practice as the occasion might rise. The officers do not dare oppose him in this because he is very autocratic.*¹³

Louise understood inter-relational difficulties, but also recognized the need to have someone who knew how to manage. She would have liked for every place to have a relationship with the Procurator as at Bulles where she noted in her account:

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, A. 51, Visits to the Confraternities of Sannois, Franconville, Herblay and Conflans, p. 705.

¹² The duty of the procurer will be to manage and negotiate the matters concerning the temporal funds of the confraternity, through the advice and direction of the parish priest, the prioress, the treasurer and the other assistant, to suggest, at each assembly that is held in regard to this matter, the state of the affairs that he is handling (Rule of the Confraternity of Châtillon – Coste, Vol. 13, p. 426, French Edition).

¹³ *Spiritual Writings*, A. 51, p. 706.

*The Procurator administers everything with great charity. He is well respected and loved.*¹⁴

How do you get people to work together? For Louise, one needed to know how to overcome personal differences when the welfare of the poor was at stake.

Relational difficulties were often linked to quarrels between the villagers. How does one overcome this? In the village of Neuville, Louise de Marillac noticed a very beneficial action on the part of the President of the Confraternity:

*There are often little disputes among the Ladies which interfere with their practice of charity. Some of them do not wish to be in the company of those with whom they have quarrelled. The Superioress is sometimes able to remedy the situation.*¹⁵

It was a joy for Louise to note that at Pont-Sainte-Maxence the exercise of charity was beneficial not only for the sick but also for the entire village:

*They show great cordiality to one another and are devoted to works of charity. Even their husbands encourage them in their endeavours. The people have noticed them, and since the establishment of the Charity, the local inhabitants are better.*¹⁶

Louise de Marillac enjoyed reviewing the passage in the rules concerning mutual relationships with all the members, a passage that she did not hesitate to comment upon:

*They shall cherish one another as sisters whom Our Lord has united by the bond of His love.*¹⁷

b. Service of the Poor

Louise de Marillac was very attentive to the way in which the Ladies carried out their service to the sick. She notes the smallest details in her accounts. At Bulles, she notices the exactitude of the visits:

The sick poor of Bulles are visited three times a day. They bring cooked portions of meat but not in equal amounts to all because

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, A. 52, Visits to the Confraternities of Verneuil, Pont-Sainte-Maxence, Gournay, Neuville and Bulles, p. 724.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 723.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, A. 54, Draft of the Rule, p. 727.

*each Lady wants to take from her home what she judges right so as to please the sick.*¹⁸

At Verneuil, it seemed to her that the sick were being visited late:

*The poor are served every day as the Rule ordains but the portion of meat is brought only at eleven o'clock.*¹⁹

In Pont-Sainte-Maxence visits were curtailed during the epidemic. This was most often done for prudence. Louise wished that the Ladies were a bit earlier and a little more generous in what they brought:

*In Pont-Sainte-Maxence, the Ladies of Charity faithfully visit the sick except during time of plague ... When they visit, the Ladies bring portions of meat already cooked, but they do so only at noon and they leave only a little bouillon.*²⁰

The manner of serving the poor was often a source of friction between the members. The very first rule, that of Châtillon, which served as a model for the confraternities that were later established, was very explicit:

*The person in charge for the day shall prepare the meal and bring it to the sick; on entering, she shall greet them gaily and charitably, arrange the tray upon the bed and place a napkin on it, also a small drinking cup, a spoon and some bread. She shall then wash the patient's hands and say the Benedicte, pour the soup on to the bread in a porringer, and place the meat on a plate, arranging all this on the tray. She shall then charitably invite the sick person to eat, for the love of Jesus and His Holy Mother: and shall do all this as if she were dealing with her own son or rather with God, Who refers to himself whatever good she does the poor.*²¹

But places and circumstances could bring modifications to this precise program.

*Many of the Ladies spend money on their appointed day according to their own whims and pay little attention to the Rule.*²²

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, A. 52, Visits to the Confraternities of Verneuil, Pont-Sainte-Maxence, Gournay, Neufville and Bulles, p. 724.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Coste, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 1, p. 84.

²² *Spiritual Writings*, A. 51, Visits to the Confraternities of Sannois, Franconville, Herblay and Conflans, p. 705.

At Sannois, the Superioress of the Confraternity, in agreement with the Treasurer, simplified their method of service. She was content in giving the money to the sick.²³ In Franconville, Louise noticed that meat was rarely given to the sick. The same existed at Conflans.

*Upon the advice of the Pastor, money has been given to the sick. The sick often have to go without meat.*²⁴

Without judging these practices that were harmful to the well-being of the sick, Louise de Marillac invited the Ladies of the Charity to review the Rules of their Confraternity and apply the given directives.

c. Taking care of the poor

These questions would often come to the attention of the visitor: “Who must we care for? Who are the truly poor? What should be done when the poor who ask to be cared for by the Confraternity have property?” Ever-present questions. Louise de Marillac showed herself to be very attentive to the multiple questions posed by the Ladies of Charity.

In Sannois, the Ladies wondered about the goods set up for the Confraternity of this village:

*They are having difficulty in serving the sick. They say that there is no need for a Charity at Sannois to serve only those who have nothing since there are none, or practically none, in this condition.*²⁵

A situation was presented to Louise that must have occurred in other places:

*There was a sick woman who had property, which she gave in its entirety to her relatives before or during her illness, without the knowledge of the Ladies, who now wonder if they should serve such persons under these circumstances since the timing of the gift may have been deliberate.*²⁶

In Neufville it was the townspeople who reacted to the slowness of the Ladies in accepting persons for care by the Confraternity:

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 706.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 705.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, A. 52, Visits to the Confraternities of Verneuil, Pont-Sainte-Maxence, Gournay, Neufville and Bulles, p. 724.

*In Neuville, the peasants complain because the sick are not attended to quickly enough. The officers are prevented from doing what they should for the sick who have assets which they cannot sell.*²⁷

In Gournay the townspeople watched over the use of their donations:

*The local inhabitants complain that the charitable donations are used to have Masses said.*²⁸

Faced with all of these questions, Louise de Marillac invited the Confraternity members to come together and reflect as a group. The exchange would examine the different goods. Louise de Marillac seemed very competent on the juridical level, using precise terminology. She would make a distinction between personal property that could be sold (extra clothing, pewterware, etc.) and the land and home. There again, a distinction was made between the property that could not “help” the sick person, that is, land that had no advantages, either because there was no yield from the fields or because it was mortgaged, and “land free and clear,” that is, property that was no longer burdened with expenses or mortgages and consequently was a source of revenue for the owner:²⁹

*It was decided that if the sick had extra furnishings or clothing, such as pewter dishes and the like, or wine or a little wheat or even a bread oven, all had to be sold before they could be assisted. However, should they have a piece of land from which they can derive no profit, they should be accepted for care by the Charity. Such would not be the case, if they have an acre to which they have clear title.*³⁰

Another important question concerned the gifts or legacies left by the sick during their life or after their death:

*They also asked if they could assist those sick persons who would want to give their few assets to the Charity after their death or their cure so as to repay the expenses incurred in caring for them.*³¹

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 723.

²⁹ *Dictionnaire de Droit et de pratique*, Claude Joseph Ferrière, 3rd Edition 1778 – Volume 1, p. 68 for “help” and p. 621 for “free and clear.”

³⁰ *Spiritual Writings*, A. 47, Visit to the Confraternity of Gournay, p. 729.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Once again, Louise gave a very specific answer. The service undertaken within the Confraternity of Charity is a free service “*with no thought of remuneration.*” The Ladies who volunteer are not “employed,” salaried.

There must be a great deal of prudence when dealing with legacies. The sick person must not be urged to do so by the member of the Confraternity, the desire to do so must be completely free. The conditions for accepting legacies were quite clear; the sick person must not have any debts nor have any heirs.

In her account Louise wrote down the response she gave to the Ladies of the Charity:

*They were told that [...] if it should happen that a sick person whom they have assisted, desires, at the hour of death, to leave property to the Charity, they may accept it, provided the sick person has not been asked to do this by the Ladies, does not have any debts and does not have any heirs in need.*³²

d. Spiritual Life

Louise would not end her visit without looking into the spiritual life of the group. I believe that she must have asked some questions as the women of the Confraternity did not seem to converse too freely. During her visit at Herblay, Louise noted that the Ladies of Charity were still in their first fervor but that at Sannois the impetus had cooled a bit:

*These Ladies, or at least the majority of them, go months without receiving Holy Communion. They need to have their zeal rekindled by a sermon....*³³

Everywhere Louise noted satisfactorily the concern of all these Ladies to accompany the sick at their moment of death, obtaining the presence of a priest.

e. Results of the Visits

It is perhaps a little difficult to talk about the results of the visits but Louise de Marillac wrote down the commitment taken in numerous places to be more faithful to the Rule and more punctual in their service:

*In Conflans their intentions are good. All have promised to observe the Rule.*³⁴

³² *Ibid.*, p. 730.

³³ *Ibid.*, A. 51, Visits to the Confraternities of Sannois, Franconville, Herblay and Conflans, p. 705.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 705.

What Louise de Marillac did not write down was the enthusiasm she aroused amongst the townspeople. A long time later, she would retell some of her memories to the Daughters of Charity and one of them related:

One time she was in a village where all the women were so encouraged upon hearing her that they told their husbands who also wanted to hear her. The husbands were told that men could not come. The men hid under the bed and everywhere in the room and later asked if she said anything about it.³⁵

And when leaving the area, a large crowd was there to say good-bye. The children were jostling each other and laughing. The same sister continued her story:

And upon leaving the area, everyone and the children rushed after her when one of the children fell under the wheel of a cart. But Louise raised her mind to God to pray for the child who was not hurt at all and she gave thanks to God.³⁶

The arrival of the Visitor, the Animator, was desired by many Confraternities. The requests were most often communicated through Monsieur Vincent:

Mademoiselle Tranchot really wants you in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges where the Charity is going badly. I think Our Lord is reserving the success of that good work for you.³⁷

A few months later, a new invitation arrived:

...to work at the Charity of Champigny which really needs your presence.³⁸

While at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges Louise received a short note from Vincent de Paul:

Please find out how the Charity in Crosnes is doing. It is a little village as far from Villeneuve as the Saint-Victor gate is from Notre-Dame, or thereabouts. If you had a horse to go there, you would not lose time.³⁹

³⁵ Charpy, *Documents of the Company*, Document 803, Testimony of Barbe Bailly, p. 923 (French text only).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Coste, Vol. 1, Letter 85. – To Saint Louise, 12 October 1631, p. 128.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter 109. – To Saint Louise, June 1632, p. 160.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter 111. – To Saint Louise in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, 10 July, 1632, p. 164.

3. Qualities of an Animator

One could ask what could have caused such enthusiasm within the Ladies of Charity. They certainly found the qualities that helped them understand the importance of their commitment with Louise de Marillac.

Her attentive listening allowed them to express their difficulties and their questions. All during the time of her meeting with the Ladies of Charity, Louise discovered how much listening required self-forgetfulness. She learned to quiet her concerns for her son (worries that often returned in her letters to Vincent de Paul). These women understood that Louise de Marillac took into account all that they expressed and that she would try hard to grasp the depths of their thoughts. This listening allowed them to have confidence in themselves for they felt recognized in what they were doing. The simplicity with which Louise would listen to all that was said to her offered her speakers true comfort and helped them find solutions to their problems or difficulties.

The Ladies of Charity were struck by her **respect for each person**. With Louise they never saw harsh judgements of their attitudes or behavior. She knew how to indicate what was not going well but with such politeness and love for the poor that her words were well received. It seems that beyond appearances Louise de Marillac knew how to discover and value the possibilities of the members of the Confraternities that she visited.

Louise de Marillac's **competence** in numerous areas made her advices and decisions easier. Louise acquired this knowledge over the years by making inquiries of juridical or financial specialists, observing physicians, and also by reading. Louise was aware that it was necessary to be knowledgeable and to keep up-to-date in order to teach others.

4. Stumbling blocks to avoid

If Louise de Marillac possessed numerous qualities, if she knew how to energize the Ladies of Charity, it was because she had been confronted with personal difficulties. The voluminous correspondence with Vincent de Paul allows us to discover them.

One of the first stumbling blocks that threatened Louise is frequently found among those who fully become engaged within an enthusiastic mission. The risk is to want to do too much! Vincent de Paul warned her:

Blessed be God that you are feeling better and are acquiring a taste for working at the salvation of souls! But I am really afraid that you are doing too much ... Be careful about this, I beg you,

*Mademoiselle. Our Lord wants us to serve Him with common sense, and the opposite is called indiscreet zeal.*⁴⁰

Louise undoubtedly did not understand this warning. While at Beauvais, she received a much more explicit letter.

*Blessed be God that you have arrived in good health! Oh! take great care to preserve it for the love of Our Lord and His Poor members and be careful not to do too much. It is a ruse of the devil, by which he deceives good people, to induce them to do more than they are able, so that they end up not being able to do anything. The spirit of God urges one gently to do the good that can be done reasonably, so that it may be done perseveringly and for a long time. Act, therefore, in this way, Mademoiselle, and you will be acting according to the spirit of God.*⁴¹

Words of wisdom that Louise's active nature had difficulty integrating!

Another stumbling block had been discouragement in the face of difficulties and failures. If there were warm welcomes in numerous villages, there were places where her presence was not wanted. At Villepreux, the parish priest did not accept that a woman would come to his parish to speak to his parishioners. Vincent advised her and helped her to accept this rejection:

*It is very difficult, Mademoiselle, to do any good without conflict. And because we must relieve other people's distress as far as it is in our power, I think that you would be performing an action agreeable to God by visiting the Pastor and apologizing for having spoken without his knowledge to the sisters of the Charity and the girls. Tell him that you thought you could act in Villepreux just as you did in Saint-Cloud and elsewhere, and that this will teach you your duty another time. If he is not pleased with this, leave it at that. My advice is that you do this. Our Lord will perhaps draw more glory from your submission than from all the good you could do. One beautiful diamond is worth more than a mountain of stones, and one virtuous act of acquiescence and submission is better than an abundance of good works done for others.*⁴²

If it was difficult to accept rejection, Louise also knew that it was not easy to maintain balance faced with the multiple praises that she received. She confided these concerns to Vincent de Paul who responded:

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter 48. – To Saint Louise, in Villepreux, May 1630, p. 79.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Letter 58. – To Saint Louise, in Beauvais, 7 December 1630, p. 92.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Letter 46. – To Saint Louise, in Villepreux, April 1630, p. 75.

*When you are honored and esteemed, unite your spirit to the mockeries, contempt, and ill treatment that the Son of God suffered. Surely, Mademoiselle, a truly humble spirit humbles itself as much amid honors as amid insults, acting like the honeybee which makes its honey equally well from the dew that falls on the wormwood as from that which falls on the rose.*⁴³

Louise de Marillac, Confraternity animator, desired and knew how to help each of the women who were invested in this work of Charity understand her vocation in the Church and in the world and to accomplish it. Together, they lived the experience of a faith committed to the service of the poor.

It was in welcoming the Word of God and the love of Christ received particularly in the Eucharist that Louise found this energy that allowed her to become involved in the animation of the Confraternities. She realized within her life what Vincent de Paul would later say to one of his confreres who was named Superior of the large Seminary in Agde:

*An important point, and one to which you should carefully devote yourself, is to establish a close union between yourself and Our Lord in prayer. That is the reservoir in which you will receive the instructions you need to fulfill the duties on which you are now about to enter. When in doubt, have recourse to God and say to Him: “O Lord, you who are the Father of light, teach me what I ought to do in this circumstance.”*⁴⁴

(Translation: TRANSLATION CENTER – DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY, Paris)

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Letter 58. – To Saint Louise, in Beauvais, 22 October 1630, p. 94.

⁴⁴ Coste, *Conferences to the CMs*, Conference 153, Instructions given to Fr. Antoine Durand, pp. 324-325.