



# **Louise de Marillac, formator.**

In the 2nd conference of July 1660, on the virtues of Louise de Marillac, Vincent de Paul begins by saying to the Sisters:

“We've seen this beautiful portrait before us; now it's on high. It remains for us to pattern ourselves on it...” (St. Vincent. July 24, 1660. *The Virtues of Louise de Marillac*. Coste X, p. 582.)

The Sisters describe the figure of Louise de Marillac, sharing their thoughts on her virtues with great emotion. Vincent interrupts again and says:

“What a portrait God is placing before your eyes... she tended to conform all her actions to those of Our Lord.... See what a portrait that is! ...strive to pattern your lives on hers.” (St. Vincent. July 24, 1660. *The Virtues of Louise de Marillac*. Coste X, p. 585.)

Faced with this repetitive expression of St. Vincent, we are going to dwell briefly today on a portrait, a mosaic-icon, full of life which invites us to enter into the life of Louise de Marillac as a formator, passionate to configure... to conform her life to that of Christ and to imbue this spirit in her Daughters. It contains great symbolism.

In the middle of the whole representation, the figure of LOUISE emerges. A great person with her feet on the ground, feet that blend with the colour of the earth because she knows the misery lived by persons of the poor; she knows that they are a privileged "theological place" where one can discover God and meet Him, that Christ identifies with them.

At the same time, her figure rises up to heaven, wanting to raise all misery to God, wanting to make her dream of universal fraternity come true.

Her gaze is a direct gaze, her eyes are wide open. It is a very direct communication with the person, it signifies her attention to the whole being of the person and to all his/her needs.

It is a living memory, a link between 1623 and 2023 and what is to come; it is like the beginning of the communion of saints in the present.

After the "Lumière" experience of Pentecost on 4 June 1623, to be totally of God and to unite her will to His, will be her greatest desire... Her experience tells her that a whole road is opening up before her, a road to be travelled in continuous progression and progress, a road which demands deep interior life and a solid formation, an uninterrupted journey, "a life-long task," a constant response to a Call which never ceases. The Charity of Christ urges her!

The open book and the finger pointing towards it, like the Pantocrator, express her desire to teach the world that true charity must always be accompanied by instruction and formation.

It is enough to go through her abundant correspondence and her writings to realise that Louise is a formator in life, from life and for life. Her life, touched by the Lord, led her to discover Him present in every event and in every person and led her to help the Daughters of Charity to make this same reading, even in the midst of the most complex and painful situations.

She takes advantage of every situation and every moment: conferences, readings, journeys, regulations, sending on mission, letters... to make a deep and reflective reading of the Lord's passage and to help acquire or strengthen the qualities and aptitudes necessary to carry out a professional service of quality, to increase fraternity, belonging, fidelity, prayer life...

Louise wants the Sisters to be well-trained to carry out a comprehensive service: learn their Catechism, learn to read, to draw blood, to care... with tenderness, gentleness, simplicity, humility, love... this is her passion. She discerns each event and the situation of each Sister, she accompanies and guides with gentleness, firmness, tenderness and closeness. Her passion for the Lord leads her to pass it on to those who come in contact with her.

Conferences, letters, regulations and other writings speak to us of this formation made with and from the heart, as shown in the open book next to her heart, held with delicateness and indicating with her finger the great importance of cultivating this formation. The shades of colour and green fill us with hope.

It would be necessary to go through them all to understand the enormous work of Louise de Marillac as a FORMATOR.

## **CONCLUSION**

"You are God's now," Pope Francis said to the young people at World Youth Day in Panama. We are God's now in that Company that the Holy Spirit gave Louise a glimpse of, in the Lumière of 1623.

Let us live like her and make our formation a path of progressive configuration to Christ, Adorer of the Father, Servant of his loving plan and Evangeliser of Persons who are poor during this time of grace that the Lord gives us, to continue to make his Love present in our world, in our NOW.

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