



Saint Louise de Marillac, Mystic of the Cross.

Good day.

As part of our journey leading to the 400th anniversary of Saint Louise's "Light," I would like to reflect briefly with you today on Louise and the Mystique of the Cross.

The shadow of the Cross is certainly present in her account of her Pentecost Experience with its Light and Darkness, Doubt and Hope.

In the midst of her suffering, she foresaw that one day the words of the Superior General of the Capuchins who had denied her admission into the cloister would be fulfilled,

"God has other designs on you" and so she dared to hope.

The centrality of Jesus Crucified in Louise's life is evident in her earliest writings.

Life had taught her that her vocation was to unite herself to Jesus on the Cross.

In a retreat meditation from this period, she writes, "God, who has granted me so many graces, had 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." (SW, 711)

Thus, there is nothing surprising in Louise's choice of a plain cross with the inscription SPES UNICA [Only Hope] to mark her final resting place.

But for Louise, steeped in Sacred Scripture as she was, it is a bit unusual since it comes not from Scripture but from an ancient hymn, the Vexilla Regis, which she surely chanted as a young girl at Poissy.

The liturgical use, both for Passontide, and for the feast of the triumph of the cross provided a basis for her unshakable hope.

In 1643, twenty years after the light Louise had designed and begun using the seal that would become the seal of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

It bears the image of a burning heart and Jesus Crucified, surrounded by the words of Saint Paul as she had modified them "The Charity of Jesus Crucified urges us."

The love of Jesus Crucified was also the focus of Louise's relationship with and formation of the early Daughters of Charity. In the only formal conference we have from her, she urges them,

"Let us take the first step in following Him, which is to exclaim, "I desire it thus. As proof thereof, I am going to follow You to the foot of Your Cross which I choose as my cloister." (SW, 828)

Then, in the same conference, Louise prayed, "My Lord, I received a kind of new light concerning the uncommon love.

You wish to receive from those You choose to exercise the purity of Your love on earth.

Look on this little flock of Yours and see if we dare to hope for such a thing." (SW, 829)

There it is, "... dare to hope." Darkness and light had marked the dramatic, often traumatic events of Louise's life. Through it all she had dared to hope in the Cross of Jesus Christ whom she loved and served in His suffering members.

Sr Louise Sullivan