

## REFLECTION FOR SEPTEMBER:

# *The Words and Deeds of St Louise de Marillac*

*Text: María Eugenia Magallanes Negrete --- Translation: Father Charlie Plock*

### **Introduction: Saint Louise, a leader who teaches us with her example**

In 1625 Vincent de Paul responded positively to the request of Madame Le Gras, Louise de Marillac, to become her spiritual director. At that time he could not have imagined the place that she would occupy in his life. He counseled this woman who had suffered greatly and involved her in his service on behalf of the poor. Like Vincent de Paul and in imitation of Jesus Christ, Louise was an authentic woman... a good organizer and a woman gifted with a facility in relating to others.

Louise was an important person for the members of the various Confraternities... she was their first Visitor. From her very first contact with the Confraternities (1629) she discovered the importance of attentive listening, thus putting aside her own concerns. This attitude allowed the members to speak openly about their problems. Those women knew that Louise respected everything that they said. They felt as though they were understood and therefore they trusted her. At no time did they feel they were being judged, even though at different times Louise would point out a better way for them to carry out their ministry: **“The Ladies of Charity have recognized the needs of the poor... and God has given them the grace to provide for them in a charitable and magnificent manner... The means that these charitable women utilize in order to distribute the various provisions is their assemblies that are directed by faithful and charitable persons who recognize the true needs of the poor and provide for these people in a prudent manner, tending to their material as well as their spiritual needs”**.

We, as AIC volunteers, ought to feel privileged in being called by the Lord to this vocation: **“You should be very grateful for the graces God has given you by placing you in a position to render Him such great services”** (SWLM:271 [L.228]).

### **Development of the Theme: The spiritual life of Saint Louise (the presence of Christ in the Incarnation and in the Eucharist)**

Louise de Marillac loved to contemplate the mystery of the **Blessed Trinity** and how these persons would communicate their love to humanity. She wrote: **“As soon as human nature had sinned, the Creator, who wanted to repair this fault by a great act of love, ordered, in the Council of His Divinity, that one of the three Persons should become man. By so doing, He gave proof of deep, true humility”** (SWLM:700 [A.7]).

She reflected on the reasons that might have led God to send the Son to earth. One simple phrase can be viewed as a summary of her thoughts about the reasons for the Incarnation: **“God never showed greater love for his creatures than when he resolved to become man”** (SWLM:700 [A.7]).

The Incarnation of the Son of God is real: the Word became flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. With great devotion Louise contemplated God calling Mary, the simple woman from Nazareth, the mother of God and contemplated the reality **“of the dignity for which God had destined her as the Mother of His Son”** (SWLM:735 [M.35b]).

Through her own experience Louise knew the joy of giving life to a child, giving to another that which is most intimate: one's own blood. She described that joy when she wrote: **“Now is the time for the fulfillment of your promise. Blessed may you be forever, O my God, for the choice you made of the Holy Virgin... You used the blood of the Blessed Virgin to form the body of your dear Son”** (SWLM:801 [A13b]). All of Mary's glory is derived from her

divine maternity. Louise proclaimed that Mary was **“the masterpiece of God’s omnipotence in a nature that is purely human”** (SWLM:831 [A.31b]). To honor Mary for the choice that God made is to honor God. God so loved men and women that God wanted to be in their midst, wanted to receive his humanness from Mary.

In addition to the theme of the Incarnation, Louise also wrote about the Eucharist: **“The Son of God was not satisfied with taking a human body and dwelling in the midst of humankind. He desired an inseparable union of divine nature with human nature. He accomplished this after the Incarnation by the admirable institution of the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar in which the fullness of the divinity dwells continually in the Second Person of the most Blessed Trinity”** (SWLM:784: [A.14]).

The incarnation is not limited to Jesus’s lifetime. When Jesus knew that his hour was approaching, he found the means to prolong his presence so that he would always remain with us. Louise was in awe as she contemplated the extraordinary mystery of the Eucharist.

### **Personal and Community Reflection:**

We pray that the Lord might fill us with his Holy Spirit in order that we might reflect upon the words that we have read. May this Spirit of the Lord help us to understand that which Louise saw so clearly, namely, **“the poor demand more than alms and medicine and clothing or some form of more or less permanent assistance! They demand the absolute surrendering of our life”** (Father Celestino Fernández, CM).

### **Activities and Questions:**

#### **Individual Response:**

- ❖ Did you learn something new about Louise de Marillac?
- ❖ How did you feel as you read this reflection: surprise, admiration, questions, something else?

#### **Group Response:**

- ❖ What teachings do you consider to be important for training the members of our Association?
- ❖ What means can we utilize in order to confront new challenges?

### **Prayer: Generosity**

*Lord, teach us to be generous;  
To give without counting the cost;  
To return good for evil;  
To serve without expecting some reward;  
To draw closer to those whom we find repulsive;  
To do good to those who cannot reciprocate;  
To love generously;  
To work without being concerned about rest;  
To be solely concerned about giving;  
To give our whole self;  
To give to those who need us,  
Hoping to receive only You, Lord, as our reward.  
Amen.*

### **Hymn**