

Father Alvaro Mauricio Fernandez, CM
Colombia

Luisa de Marillac, a 17th-century French woman, is a woman who had been prepared and trained in the style of her time to be a former of the Daughters of Charity and animator of the Charities that were born in France.

Luisa de Marillac's goal is to help people to train to serve Jesus Christ bodily and spiritually in the poor. This objective, imposed by the social and religious needs of the poor, she had learned from Vincent de Paul, as he used this great woman to reach so many women who were excited to support charitable works for the poorest and most abandoned.

No doubt it was very difficult for Louise de Marillac to train the young women, the Ladies who were excited to make their financial contributions in a new style; it was an unknown way of life until then.

The tenacity of Louise to form them, in all that coming and going in the most unknown places of France... she takes every opportunity to give a practical life lesson, from her experience she writes about the details of practical life: *"When they arrive at the inn, they will beg the inn to give them a small room to retire and lie alone. ... And as usual bread costs dearly at the inns, they will do well to buy a big one in the bakery and have enough."* Practices that the Sisters who make their visits should observe as they go on their way.

The formation pointed to a goal that does not escape the gaze of Louise and Vincent: **service to God in the poor**; enthusing women to love God, but doing something for those most in need. Here is the key to bringing into practice the gospel preached by Jesus. *One day a man approaches Jesus and asks, "Master, what is the greatest commandment of the Law?"* And here begins the formation for those who accompany the Charities founded by Vincent de Paul in 1617. Jesus' answer – ***"The first commandment is: you will love the Lord with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength. The second is similar to the first: You will love your neighbour as yourself."***

Louise loves God with all her heart so she dares to send her guardian angel every time she goes on her way to visit the Charities, her spiritual life is a priority in her formation, so important to her. Throughout the journey, Louise de Marillac, when she sees the bell tower of a church, usually sent her guardian angel to greet the Master in his Tabernacle: *"Oh my dear angel, go, I beg you, where Jesus dwells. Tell this Divine Savior that I adore him, that I love him with all my heart. Invite this lovely prisoner of love to come to my heart, to make*



his abode there. This heart is too small to hold such a great King, but I want to enlarge it through love and faith."

Louise visited the places where the Ladies of the Confraternities provided services; to ensure the quality of the service they offered, she personally reviewed the accounts, made the reports, and encouraged the workers to see Christ in those poor whom they served by encouraging them to love others as well.

In the villages, Louise feels the enormous ignorance of children, young people and adults and feels called by God to organize the Schools of Charity and writes in the Rules of the Confraternities of Charity: "Someone will contribute to the preservation of this good work... they will teach the girls of the villages, when they are there, and try to train some young people in the same place so that in their absence they will continue to do the same, all for *God's love and without any retribution.*" (Written S.L.M. CEME 1985, p.716).

We can well say and assume that Louise was formed in the school of Vincent de Paul, is constantly self-formed in the school of life, and she forms those who are part of the Charities to train those who will be the recipients of the charity.

Louise de Marillac's view is a practical one; from her we can learn that the valuable thing is to be there in the field of service, and from what you see, draw practical conclusions in order to better serve. At first she was shy to serve the poor but experience led her to love what she did. That would be the great secret in the formation of those who are part of the Charities, forming and instructing with the love with which the Son of God would do so.

The training consists of giving a daily report, the functioning of the Confraternity, determining the quality of the Service provided; Louise perceives what is happening through meetings with the members of the Confraternity and visits to the poor in their homes.

Her spirit of observation and sense of discernment help her greatly, and her competence in many fields will allow her to give concrete answers. Louise anticipates what we today call: See, Judge and Act.

Finally, the formation is an animation to do everything well, and to be united as indicated by St. John in chapter 17... *"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one."* Louise de Marillac encourages them to work together, gives them catechesis and likes to re-read with all the members of the Confraternity the draft Regulation on mutual relations: the passage: *"both will contribute to the preservation of this work, according to its faculties and devotion; they will love each other as sisters to which Our Lord has united with the bond of their love."* (Draft Regulation – E. 31, p. 715).





It is impossible not to end with that beautiful sending by Vincent de Paul to Louise de Marillac at the beginning of a mission in the formation given to those who are ready to make many good women excited to move forward in service to the poor: ***"Well, Mademoiselle, in the name of Our Lord, I pray to his divine goodness that he will accompany her to be her comfort on the way, her shadow against the burning of the sun, the protection of rain and cold, soft bed in her tiredness, strength in her work and finally return her with perfect health and full of good works."***

