**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (2016)**

**Feast of Saint Louise de Marillac**

**Opening Prayer:** As we approach the 400th anniversary of our establishment, we pray, O God, that through the intercession of Saint Louise de Marillac, whose feast we celebrate today, we, the more than 150,000 AIC volunteers, may remain faithful to the vocation to which we were called. May we be instruments of your peace and your love as we continue to build a world of justice and peace, a world without poverty, a world in which no one is excluded, a world without discrimination, a world in which you are the center of our lives. We pray in the name of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

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In *Misericordiae Vultus* (#9), the Bull through which Pope Francis announced the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, we read:

*“As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God’s action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.”*

**Let us pray together:** Dear Saint Louise, you are a great example to us; you made mercy your way of life and were always attentive to those most in need. In those persons who were poor, you found the suffering Christ. Intercede before Christ, our Lord; intercede on behalf of all the AIC Volunteers so that we might be signs of hope for the most vulnerable members of society. May we not be startled by the difficulties that we must confront; fearlessly and with humility and simplicity and charity may we collaborate in changing those unjust structures that oppress our brothers and sisters living in situations of poverty.

(Pray the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory be to the Father; say also: *O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you!*)

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In *Misericordiae Vultus* (#15), Pope Francis writes:

*“In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care … Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity!”*

**Let us pray together:** Dear Saint Louise, these words of Pope Francis identify with our charism. In fact, it would seem that those words were written precisely for us as AIC volunteers… they express Saint Vincent’s constant concern as well as your concern to alleviate the suffering of so many countless people who hunger and thirst for justice. Intercede before the Lord for us so that our hearts might be enflamed with the fire of the Holy Spirit and so that we might be able to respond, in accord with the will of God, to the various forms of poverty that are in the midst of our world today.

(Pray the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory be to the Father; say also: *O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you!*)

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In *Misericordiae Vultus* (#24), the Pope states:

*My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.*

**Let us pray together:** Dear Saint Louise, intercede for us before our Blessed Mother so that we might obtain from her Son the grace to be merciful. May we experience the love of God in order to make that same love known to others; may we comfort those who suffer and visit those who are alone or infirm; may we feed those who are hungry, give water to those who are thirsty and clothe those who are in need.

(Pray the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory be to the Father; say also: *O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you!*)