



# louise de marillac and tenderness



Louise de Marillac was a woman who embodied tenderness. She was by nature a sensitive woman and this sensitivity enabled her to be a great servant of the poor. Louise often used to say that ...*We are servants of the poor; therefore we must be poorer than they are*<sup>1</sup>

By this I think she meant taking the attitude of servant and placing their needs ahead of our own.

Louise expressed her great tenderness towards her family. She faithfully cared for her husband in his illness, putting up with his moods and irritability. With Michel, her son, Louise was the most tender and sensitive. It could be said that Louise was overly tender towards her son and excessively concerned for his welfare.

Louise's tenderness was most evident in her service of people living in poverty. She told the sisters ...*Oh, what a happiness, if, without offending God, the Company could be employed only in the service of those who are destitute in all things!*<sup>2</sup>

which showed how important the service of people in need was for her. She also taught the sisters how to treat poor people, saying...*and above all, be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply.*<sup>3</sup>

Louise was also a very tender leader. She cared deeply about her sisters and worked very hard to ensure that they knew how important that they were to her. She wrote to one community of sisters...*May God's most holy love always make it meritorious for you, and may He continue to bestow His graces on all our sisters so as to keep them in the state you described to me. I embrace all of them tenderly, and urge them to think often of eternity so that the thought of the roses to come may console them amidst the thorns.*<sup>4</sup>

**How is tenderness operative in your work?**

