



Louise de Marillac:



We are all Born with a Vocation

By Benito Martínez, C.M.

"I believe, Monsieur, that the return [of this young lady] will have greatly dampened the enthusiasm of any candidates wishing to join us. Great courage and steadfastness are essential in order to persevere here because we are bound only by obedience and are often exposed to the danger of discouragement in various circumstances. It is more than a little disheartening for us to spend so much time and so many years in testing and forming our sisters only to have them taken from us by weakness. So long as God is glorified by it, nothing else matters."

Louise de Marillac, in a letter to the abbot of Vaux (c. 293)

Reflection:

1. The people knew that these young women belonged to a charity association, and to these young women the Company seemed a sisterhood of laywomen in favor to the poor, so they signed in and, when they got tired, they left. Sister Mathurine Guérin said, "I heard him say [to Santa Luisa] that, at first, when all this started, young women came in large numbers, but persevered very few, and she suffered a lot to see so many different faces" (D 946). At first, there was little required from the girls to join the confraternity: that they were healthy and strong, to serve the sick and poor. Namely, *to have a vocation for this*.
2. Bérulle states that all people are born with a particular vocation accomplished in history according to divine Providence. Many seek it at some time in their life and discover it through the years.
3. To St. Louise, God *accepts* her answer, and gives her a special grace to walk that road: *it is the charisma of his indelible vocation*. Mediations, human and social demands are signs of a vocation, and they are constitutive of a vocation. In that century that mediations were the economical and social circumstances or the family status which imposed the state of life to choose: married or religious — because singleness was frowned upon and dangerous for a woman.
4. If the vocation is made by a number of personal qualities and family and social circumstances, this means that each person has a vocation that requires, first, oneself to know it, and then to carry it at all times throughout one's life. You can not say, just from time to time... now I wear this shirt and then other different one. It would be suicide, to slowly kill oneself. Thus is the Kingdom of God built, as St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac and Blessed Frederic Ozanam and companions teach us.
5. Looking at the topics of politics and families, it seems that the vocation of the individuals is making money and getting power and prestige. It is the goal of families, when the fathers impose their children the career they have to study, and the goal of people, when they focus their life and work. The Gospel, the Kingdom of God and personal vocation do not count.

Questions for dialogue:

1. Do you know what your vocation is? Are you doing something to really know it? Would you change it for another that would bring about more material goods?
2. What goals have you proposed yourself to live your vocation? Power, prestige and money? Better living the Gospel? Implementing and making the Kingdom of God grow, a kingdom of justice, love and peace?

