

St Louise de Marillac

Patron Saint of
Social Workers

Feast day 9th May

Louise gave her Little Company a vision and a name: 'Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor'. The superior of each community was to be called 'Sister Servant'. Their works reflected their titles.

Those of us who know community services today can easily relate to the obstacles that Louise faced in the society of her own time: it was impossible to care for all those in need; there was never enough money; existing services were of low standard; and governments were preoccupied with protecting their own power. The scale of the obstacles in the seventeenth century would have daunted most of us today, but not so Louise.

...Two sets of factors need to be kept in mind when considering Louise's achievements in this divided and precarious environment. The first has to do with what she did; the second had to do with how she did it. She established a range of ministries, but always with careful administration and an insistence of loving service.

Louise established detailed rules for the day-to-day living of the Daughters of Charity, and equally detailed rules for the service of the poor. .. Louise's rules were a way of educating her community; they offer inspiration, guidelines and professional standards.

(Holy Humanity, John Honner,13-19)

Louise's Words

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. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds, we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care. (Spiritual Writings L.284B, 320-321)

I hope that your gratitude will place you in the disposition necessary to receive the graces you need to serve your sick poor in a spirit of gentleness and great compassion, in imitation of Our Lord who acted this way with the most unfortunate. (Spiritual Writings. Pg. 434 L. 383)

As for your conduct toward the sick, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart; inquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately. (Spiritual Writings. Pg. 773 A. 85)

Gentleness, cordiality and forbearance must be the practices of the Daughters of Charity just as humility, simplicity and the love of the holy humanity of Jesus Christ, who is perfect charity, is their spirit. (Spiritual Writings, L.377 p406)

Intercessions

Dear God, may we imitate Louise's gentleness as we discover the unexpected beauty within the depths of the people we serve. Lord hear us, R Lord hear our prayer.

Louise collaborated with many people in order to improve the service of people in need, may work in that same spirit of collaboration. Lord hear us, R

Louise experienced suffering in her life and this opened her heart to be more compassionate to people in need, may we be inspired by her example to be more compassionate to the people we serve. Lord hear us, R

God, you inspired Louise de Marillac with a great love of the poor and abandoned. Give us, in these challenging times, the grace to serve others with love and courage. May her spirit continue to inspire the Vincentian family. **Amen**