



ST LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Louise de Marillac was the illegitimate daughter of Louis de Marillac and an unknown mother, who died soon after her birth. She spent the early years of her life in the Dominican convent at Poissy where she received a good education and spiritual formation. Her father married when she was 3 and she was not welcomed by her stepmother. When she was 12 her father died and she needed to leave the convent. She went to a domestic school where she learnt many useful household skills.

She wished to enter religious life but was refused on account of her poor health. Her family then arranged a marriage for her to Antoine Le Gras. They had a son, Michel, and were a happy and loving family. Then Antoine became ill and died, leaving Louise widowed.

At about this time Louise met Vincent who became her spiritual director. Vincent sent Louise to visit the Confraternities of Charity that he had started in many parishes. This drew on Louise's great skills for organisation and was the beginning of a great collaboration between Vincent and Louise.

Over time it became clear that there was need for more help for the poor than the ladies of the Confraternities could give. At the same time young women began to offer to assist these ladies. So in 1633 Louise took 4 of these young women into her home and the Daughters of Charity were born.

When the Daughters of Charity began they were the first group of religious women to go out and minister to people in the world rather than in convents. They went out in pairs to serve the sick, teach, care for prisoners, care of foundlings and many other ministries They continue today with thousands of women serving in over 90 countries throughout the world.

Louise is the patron saint of social workers and the 15th of March is her feast day.

Prayer

O Gracious God, Saint Louise devoted her life to helping Saint Vincent de Paul serve the needs of the poor. She often taught: "Be diligent in serving the poor. Love the poor, honor them, as you would honor Christ Himself." I lift up to You the programs in my church and community that help the needy, and the people who do the work. Multiply the donations. Teach me how to think generously. Give me a heart that desires to care for the poor as if I were serving Jesus directly, and help me to see Jesus in each person that begs on the street corner or church door. Saint Louise, pray for us.

Amen.