



Louise de Marillac

The Charity of Christ Impelled Her

Introduction:

The suffering of so many of our sisters and brothers who seek a life of freedom from poverty, war, violence and slavery of any kind is overwhelming. In the face of this we are called to live the charism of charity more openly and urgently than ever. One of the most compelling crises today is that of the refugees in Syria. We want to think that there has never been a time in history like this, and perhaps that is true. But Louise lived through similar circumstances and the Charity of Christ impelled her to action she never could have imagined. Our challenge is to listen to how Louise speaks to us in our world today and to respond as she did. As we pray today on her feast day, we ask her to remind us of the call of our charism and of the call of the oppressed in the war-torn countries of the world and in our little corners of the world and to help us to allow the Charity of Christ to impels us!

Gathering Song: Select a or song of your choice or see some suggestions on the last page

Invitation to Prayer:

Leader: Companion to the poor and God of the lowly,
All: You extend compassion to the powerless and to the forgotten.

Leader: Love is your name.
All: Help us to serve with your love and compassion.

Opening Prayer:

All: Loving and compassionate God, we celebrate with great joy the faith and works of St. Louise de Marillac. Instill in us the fire of her love, the tenacity of her belief, and the tenderness of her care for the most abandoned. Draw us together into the light of your presence and help us to trust in the power of your Spirit, leading us ever closer to you. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Refugees in Louise's World

-In 1650, during a brutal civil war in France pitting people, particularly Catholics, against the royalty...
"In the flight of the farmers from their fields, people from their homes, the roads would be crowded with those who could run. But there were always aged peasants, men and women, who lagged behind unable to make their wearied feet keep up with those whose limbs were strong and sure. As these old people limped along, under cover of darkness, sometimes hiding in the woods—and even in pigsties, for safety—bandits would leap from behind bushes and trees..." Sister Bertrand, DC, *A Woman Named Louise*, MacMillan College Press, MO, 1956, P. 188

Refugees in Our World

-In 2011, during the civil war in Syria, centered largely on religious issues ...
"A staggering number of people are on the run from the violence. As of December 2016, in Lebanon, one in four persons is a Syrian refugee; in Jordan, one in 10 people is a Syrian refugee." www.mercycorps.org

“The UN estimates that there are 12 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria. Half of all Syrians have fled their homes – some have crossed the border into other countries, but most remain inside Syria and half of those affected are children. Those who remain face massive food insecurity, the constant threat of conflict, and collapsing infrastructure.” *American Refugee Committee (ARC)*

“In order to escape, many Syrian refugees become victims of smuggling and human trafficking. Seeking safety in neighboring countries, refugees risk their lives traveling on unsafe boats, trains, and trucks. Thousands of displaced citizens are arriving each day to refugee camps in neighboring countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey. As the number of people fleeing from Syria grows, refugee camps are becoming even more overcrowded and struggling to meet the needs of Syrian refugees.” *www.Globalgiving.org*

The Word of God: Matthew 25: 31 – 45

Reflection:

I shall, therefore, have great confidence in him who has assured me that, despite my misery and powerlessness, he will accomplish all that he desires in me....One means to attain my goal is that, without there being anything in me to indicate it, others see me as having received graces from God. (Kathryn B. LaFleur, S.P., *Louise de Marillac: A Light in the Darkness*, New City Press, NY 1996, p. 193)

“Later, when forming the first Daughters of Charity for the service of the poor, she would inculcate in them the necessity for *gentle compassion* no matter how trying the situation might be. By suffering with as well as serving those in need, they were uniting themselves to their Redeemer dying on the Cross. ...when Louise designed and began using the seal that would become the seal of the Company, it bore the image of Jesus Crucified, surrounded by the words of Saint Paul as she had modified them, ‘The Charity of Jesus *crucified* urges us’.” Louise Sullivan, D.C., ed., *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac*, 711, New City Press, NY, 1991

Reflection:

Jesus showed in his own life and death the unconditional love of God working to befriend the needy, the outcast and the oppressed. Throughout their lives, Vincent and Louise meditated on Jesus’ humanity and then lived, and related as he related. The heart of Jesus’ ministry was good news to the poor, release to the captive, liberty for the oppressed (Luke 4:18). This was also the heart of theirs. Serving the poor was not simple human generosity; it expressed God’s life in the world. Their lives call us to show forth the truth that Jesus revealed to us about ourselves. We are called to be the unqualified love of God for all. *Excerpted from: Generativity of the Legacy for Contemporary Times by Vie Thorgren.*

Invitation to Quiet Prayer and Sharing (if desired)

Responsory:

Receiving from Christ the great commandment of love, we once again remember that we can only respond to the extent that we live and radiate love. It was Louise’s profound humility that allowed her to acknowledge, accept and use her own gifts and the gifts and talents of others. In this way the poor were greatly served because of her gift of collaboration with others for the sake of the Kingdom. As the family of Charity we pray...

You have given us an example of love and service; help us to be faithful.

-You have given us an example of love and service.

Let us walk in humility and confidence.

-help us to be faithful.

Glory to you, Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.

-You have given us an example of love and service; help us to be faithful.

Intercessions:

Leader: O God, through Louise, you taught us a deeper love and respect for those whom the world oppresses and so we pray:

-help us to serve them with respect and dignity.

Christ Jesus, you inspired the daughters of Louise to be women of compassion and empathy in their service to the poor;

-help us to grow in mercy and understanding.

Loving Creator, we thank you for the example of untiring collaboration of Louise in giving flesh to the works of charity we aspire to emulate today;

-may we follow her example in our service to the Church and the world.

Louise transformed adversity into positive energy for the service of the poor.

-help us to see with the eyes of faith and the mind of Jesus.

Loving God, through the intercession of Louise, inspire more laborers to come to the vineyard to mirror the gospel values of justice and love that Louise mirrored in her life;

-may our lives and our service give you glory and praise.

For whom or what else shall we pray?

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: As we place all these desires in the heart of our loving God, we pray:

Side 1: Our Father ... who always stands with the weak, the powerless, the poor, the abandoned and the refugee.

Side 2: Who art in heaven ... where everything will be reversed, where the first will be last and the last will be first, but where all will be well and every manner of being will be well.

Side 1: Hallowed by thy name ... may we always acknowledge your holiness; may the reverence we give your name pull us out of all that prevents us from seeing the pain of our neighbor.

Side 2: Your kingdom come ... help us to create a world where, beyond our own needs and hurts, we will do justice, love tenderly, and walk humbly with you and one another.

Side 1: Your will be done ... open our freedom to let you in so that the complete mutuality that characterizes your life might flow through our veins and thus the life that we help generate may radiate your equal love for all and your special love for the poor.

Side 2: On earth as in heaven ... may the work of our hands reflect that of your glory so that the joy, graciousness, tenderness, and justice of heaven will show forth within all of our works on earth.

Side 1: Give Us ... life and love to us and help us to see always everything as gift. Help us to know that nothing comes to us by right and that we must give because we have been given to. Help us to give not just to our own but to everyone. Give your gifts to all of us equally.

Side 2: This day ... not tomorrow. Do not let us push things off into some indefinite future so that we can continue to live justified lives in the face of injustice .

- Side 1:* Our daily bread ... so that each person in the world may have enough so as to have sustenance for a healthy life. Teach us to give from our sustenance and not just from our surplus.
- Side 2:* And forgive us our trespasses ... forgive us our blindness towards our neighbor, our self-preoccupation, our racism, our sexism, and our incurable propensity to worry only about ourselves and our own.
- Side 1:* As we forgive those who trespass against us ... help us to forgive those who victimize us. Help us to mellow out in spirit, to not grow bitter.
- Side 2:* And do not put us to the test ... do not judge us only by whether we have fed the hungry, given clothing to the naked, visited the sick, or tried to mend the systems that victimized the poor. Spare us this test for none of us can stand before this gospel scrutiny. Give us, instead, more days to mend our ways, our selfishness, and our systems.
- Side 1:* But deliver us from evil ... that is, from the blindness that lets us continue to participate in anonymous systems within which we need not see who gets less as we get more.
- Side 2:* For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Ron Rolheiser, *The Lord's Prayer for Justice*, 1996, adapted

Closing Blessing:

All: May the God of Louise de Marillac be with us more and more each day, drawing us into ever deep union with the Holy One, quickening our hearts' desire for love and sharpening our awareness of all that the world suffers.

As the Charity of Christ impelled her, may we be moved with urgency to be women of the charism—witness and vision, justice and truth, passion and peace.

May our response to the challenges our God and our world place before us reflect Louise's vision of loving service and may the Charity of Christ impel us. May the blessing of Louise be upon us!

Song of Praise: Select a song of your choice

- Action Steps:**
- Explore some of the many websites to learn more about the world-wide refugee crises happening in Syria, Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi.
 - Support a humanitarian aid project in one of these countries through ARC, Mercy Corps, Kiva, Catholic Relief Services and others.
 - Organize a **DAY OF LEARNING**. Gather a group to share information and a suggested group action to alleviate the refugee crisis in a particular country.
 - Commit to pray on a particular day of the week for peace and the resolution of the refugee crisis and end to war, genocide and the systematic displacement of people.

Suggested Songs: THE CHARITY OF CHRIST, Bernadette Farrell, 2004, Oregon Catholic Press
 WE ARE CALLED, David Haas, 1988, GIA Publications
 WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, Jean Anthony Greif, 1966, Oregon Catholic Press
 THE CRY OF THE POOR, John Foley, SJ, 1991, Oregon Catholic Press
 ALLELUIA! RAISE THE GOSPEL, Bernadette Farrell, 2002, Oregon Catholic Press
 WOMEN OF THE CHURCH, Carey Landry, 2005, Oregon Catholic Press

PREPARED BY: Sister Esther Plefka, SC, Halifax