

1992

## **Louise de Marillac: Social Aspects of Her Work**

Margaret Flinton D.C.

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### **Recommended Citation**

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Margaret Flinton, D. C.

Louise  
de  
Marillac

*Social Aspect  
of Her Work*





LOUISE DE MARILLAC

*Social Aspect  
of Her Work*

Margaret Flinton, D.C.



New City Press









Published in the United States by New City Press  
86 Mayflower Avenue, New Rochelle, New York 10801  
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Translated from the original French edition  
*Sainte Louise de Marillac, L'Aspect Social de Son Oeuvre*  
by the author.

Cover design by Maureen Beitman, D. C.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Flinton, Margaret.

[*Sainte Louise de Marillac, l'aspect social de son oeuvre.*  
English.]

Louise de Marillac--social aspect of her work / Louise de  
Marillac.

Translation of: *Sainte Louise de Marillac, l'aspect social de son  
oeuvre.*

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-56548-017-1 : \$10.95

1. Louise de Marillac, Saint, 1591-1660. 2. Christian saints  
--France--Biography. 3. Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul  
--History--17th century. 4. Church work with the poor--France  
--History--17th century. 5. Church work with the poor--Catholic  
Church--History--17th century. 6. Catholic Church--France  
--Charities--History--17th century. I. Title.

BX4700.L5F5513 1992

282'.092--dc20

[B]

92-17611

Printed in the United States of America

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## FOREWORD

For close to 40 years now the French reading public have had access to Sister Margaret Flinton's doctoral dissertation entitled: *Sainte Louise de Marillac, L'Aspect Social de Son Oeuvre* which she presented to the University of Paris. It is a joy for me to welcome a translation of this painstaking and careful study which has never lost its relevance.

It is particularly appropriate that Sister Margaret Flinton's work should be offered to the English reading public a few months after the celebration of the fourth centenary of the birth of Saint Louise de Marillac. A prominent feature of those celebrations was the effort made by many to come to know more deeply this remarkable woman—a wife, a mother, a foundress, a pioneer in social assistance, a competent administrator of a host of projects for alleviating distress in the world, and a Saint. The fact that Saint Louise de Marillac was proclaimed patroness of all Christian Social Workers by Pope John XXIII in 1960, was not sufficiently known. One of the most valuable results of last year's celebration has been the emergence into clear light of this valiant woman whom Pope John Paul II has described in a letter to the Daughters of Charity as “an example to follow and one to propose to others” (Letter to the Superioress General, August 1991).

Sister Margaret Flinton throws into relief one of the most striking facets of the many-sided achievements of Saint Louise de Marillac, her ability to restore the damaged or diminished good in the human person. The loneliness of old age, the sense of alienation experienced by immigrants, the loss or ignorance of higher values by youth, the struggles of one-parent families—these and a host of other modern social problems speak to us of the damaged or diminished good in human personalities. Saint Louise, spiritual artist that she was, delicately and sensitively set about restoring that pristine beauty which the Divine Artist lovingly intended for his human creatures and which shines forth in the crucified and risen humanity of Jesus Christ.

While expressing my thanks to Sister Margaret Flinton for her work, I can assure readers that they will in the words of Pope John Paul II, “draw



from the teachings of Saint Louise material for profound and substantial reflection.”

*Feast of Saint Louise de Marillac, 1992*

*Richard McCullen, C.M.  
Superior General*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Among the many to whom I am indebted, I would like to thank in particular:

- Very Reverend Richard McCullen, C.M., Superior General,  
for his Foreword
- Sister Maureen Beitman, D.C. for her cover design
- Sister Joan Marie Waters, D.C. for her proofreading
- Mrs. Mary Powell for her endless hours of typing



## INTRODUCTION

Social Service is a common topic of conversation in today's world. As the name indicates, this Service is intended not only for individual persons but also for society itself, which suffers from many evils stemming from moral weaknesses at least as much as from physical languor and the lack of education of the masses.

The expression is more recent than the activity itself because as early as the seventeenth century, Saint Vincent de Paul set up a genuine Social Service. This fact cannot be overlooked since we are considering particularly the social aspect of Saint Louise de Marillac, and it is impossible to separate Vincent and Louise in their struggle against suffering in every form.

To bring help to an entire nation, the good "Monsieur Vincent," scarcely sustained by a financially ruined country, was able through private initiatives, in which Louise de Marillac played a major role, to establish a true network of magnificent works whose principles are still valid in our century.

Assistance through job training, night shelters, soup kitchens, visits to prisoners, care of the sick in their homes—the most modern inventions of our "social and humanitarian" spirit were already at work without however being thus labeled. At that time, the Christian religion had a term rich enough and comprehensive enough to be applied to all those works—charity.

Truly, the entire history of social progress in the world blends with the history of charity in souls. Consequently, it did not exist before Jesus Christ. Although the Greeks had a strongly-developed social spirit, it was predominantly concern for others. It was the Son of God who spread the doctrine of the love of one's neighbor. It was only then that Christianity was able to replace that sentiment of pity in relieving the poor, which prevailed in antiquity, by that fundamental teaching of Christ, "Love one another."

Stimulated by that doctrine, the Early Church gave a place of honor to poverty. Each one's home became a house of charity. Goods in common

rendered all the members of the Christian community supportive of one another. Later on, the "houses of charity" were replaced by establishments to help various age groups and to respond to the many needs of those years.

During the Middle Ages, nursing Orders cared for the sick and welcomed pilgrims. The clergy distributed charitable alms. Monasteries multiplied, and ignorance, misery and sickness each found relief. The generous gifts of a Christian society were to be abolished by the Renaissance and the Reformation. The former, by glorifying man and his faculties, re-established the personal ambition of serving others through self-interest rather than to render true service. The latter, while pillaging churches, convents and asylums, did away with both the resources and the servants of the needy.

\* \* \*

### *And, the Seventeenth Century?*

Since the Hundred Years War, misery had never been so great in France as it was at that time. The country was in a lamentable condition both physically and morally. As a result of religious and civil wars, complicated by wars with other countries, villages and countryside were abandoned after having been devastated by the armies. Cities were overflowing with the unemployed and vagabonds of every kind. Hospitals were unable to care for those who succeeded in being admitted. In the French capital the old Hôtel-Dieu had become too small.

According to the French historian, Hanotaux,

the patients were piled on top of one another, as many as four or six in the same bed, poisoning one another and dying like flies so much so that the entire neighborhood had become an epidemic area which decimated the Parisian population on a regular basis.<sup>1</sup>

In the Provinces people were dying of hunger as well as the Parisians. Contagious diseases desolated entire regions. Very heavy taxes brought about real jacqueries. Feelings of revolt were stirred up against all authority.

\* \* \*

Confronted with this misery, the first *Servants of the Poor*, guided by Monsieur Vincent and "Mademoiselle Le Gras,"<sup>2</sup> endeavored, in their



small way, to render help to the refugees on the move and to the sick in their homes and in hospitals. They took in abandoned elderly people as well as foundlings and even took remedies and words of consolation to the most despised of human beings in dungeons. They gave to the multitudes, repulsed by both civil and foreign wars, a sense of true community based on the principles of Christian fraternity.

The domain of their apostolate increased throughout the centuries to embrace mankind of all ages and places in their struggles with every type of suffering. Thanks to their founders, they learned that the good of soul and body must be worked out together.

If those social works existed in the seventeenth century, not as a social function but as combined individual and cordial efforts, it is nonetheless recognized that Vincent de Paul, assisted by dedicated colleagues, was at the root of all that organization of Public Welfare, which the following centuries would carry out. Doctor Gaudeul, for example, attributes to him, and rightly so, the title of "Precursor of Public Welfare."<sup>3</sup> A talented orator in speaking of Vincent has proclaimed that

Among all great men, it is to his unique glory that charitable organizations can neither conceive of anything nor attempt anything that he has not already in some way undertaken in the immensity of his initiatives.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \*

The question arises: What was Monsieur Vincent's efficacious method?

It was truly a very simple one. He made an appeal to persons of good will and then trained them. In 1617, he established, in the small French village of Chatillon-les-Dombes,<sup>5</sup> the first Confraternity of Charity, where each of the women who enrolled had her designated assignment. It was a wise procedure of the saintly man, who made it clear from the beginning of an avalanche of charitable works that "to be fully effective, charity must be organized."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he realized that the most efficacious power for the relief of human miseries was practically unused: to the world seeking help, he pointed to women. Henceforth, parochial authority would receive "the help of lay women."<sup>7</sup> The example of that first Confraternity of Charity was to influence others, for very soon similar associations were established on the properties which belonged to the de Gondi family: Villepreux, Joigny, Montmirail, Folleville. . . .

1629 — Paris would have its first Confraternity of Charity established

in the parish of Saint-Sauveur. The following year, Louise de Marillac<sup>8</sup> would found and organize the second Parisian confraternity in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, with the approval of its pastor and the help of several ladies. Shortly afterwards, confraternities were set up "in almost all the parishes of the city and of the suburbs of Paris."<sup>9</sup>

A change, apparently minor but really quite major, was to be introduced into the working of the Parisian confraternities. The first volunteers from the villages had been women used to work from their childhood, but in Paris the ladies were "from that parliamentary bourgeoisie, endowed with solid virtue and active faith . . ." <sup>10</sup> who were prevented at times from performing personally the services needy persons required, because they were taken up with their own household and their influential connections.

Girls or women of humbler birth were needed, women lovingly drawn to the poor and ready to do for them the "most menial and abject services" which were not suitable for persons of rank, such as "to prepare food for the poor, to carry it to them, to nurse the sick, to clean their garrets . . ." <sup>11</sup>

Monsieur Vincent himself told how the first good country girls became the helpers of the Ladies of the French capital. He wrote:

Some ladies of Paris brought about, through their pastors, the establishment of the aforementioned Confraternity in their parishes. . . . But, because the ladies who are members of the Confraternity belong, for the most part, to a social class that does not allow them to perform the most menial and abject services which are proper to the work of the said Confraternity, such as carrying the soup pot through the city, doing the bleedings, preparing and giving enemas, dressing wounds, making beds and watching at night over the sick who are alone and near death, they have associated with them some good country girls to whom God has given the desire to assist the sick poor, who attend to all these little services, after having been trained for this purpose by a virtuous widow named Mademoiselle Le Gras. They have been supported, while living in the house of the above-mentioned lady, by the assistance of some virtuous widows and other charitable persons who have contributed alms in such a way that in the 13 or 14 years since the work was begun, God has so blessed it that at present there are in each of those parishes two or three girls who work daily assisting the sick poor and even instructing poor girls when they can.<sup>12</sup>



\* \* \*

The Company of the Daughters of Charity officially came into existence in 1633. However, since 1630, France had known in the person of a poor cowgirl of Suresnes, the first Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor. She was Marguerite Naseau. She had learned to read and write by herself as she watched over her cows, and she had taught other young girls in the neighboring villages. But, in the midst of a mission preached by Monsieur Vincent, the holy priest had spoken of a project he had in mind by which he would provide volunteer nurses for the sick poor. This good girl from Suresnes let herself be persuaded. Vincent accepted her and entrusted her to Louise de Marillac to be trained for the service of the sick poor.

Marguerite Naseau arrived in February 1630.<sup>13</sup> Soon, another "good girl" and then others presented themselves in order to "serve" so that by April 1633, "Mademoiselle" had a little group at her side.<sup>14</sup> The time was approaching when Our Lord wanted to make use of her "for something that pertained to His glory."<sup>15</sup> That would be her assuming the direction and formation of the Daughters of Charity for the service of the poor.

From 1633, Louise de Marillac would exist only for the Daughters of Charity, her spiritual children. Her thoughts, her undertakings, her share in the organization of the works, all centered on "her Daughters" and their Service of the Poor. The sisters have never forgotten her. Their traditions in this regard have been faithfully kept. They continue to honor their first "Mother" as well as their "Blessed Father."

Mother, widow, founder, educator, hospital and home nurse at a period in history when the former custom of caring for the sick poor in their homes had been abandoned for so long a time that even the thought of such a service did not seem possible; Lady of Charity, who adapted herself to the life of good country girls in order to dedicate herself more completely to the poor; a woman of action practicing in the world the virtues of a religious, Louise de Marillac is of great interest, both by her life and her work, to an age in which the apostolate of the laity is most popular.

\* \* \*

We do not intend to study Louise de Marillac's biography, already well studied and written at different epochs. Gobillon, the first of her biogra-

phers, 1676, had the inestimable advantage of having known her. His book, published scarcely 16 years after Louise's death, is by that very fact one of great interest. Nevertheless, it contains but a short summary of the saint's life. The author expressed his regrets at not being able to give "a more considerable" account but had been unable "to discover all the matter needed for such a composition."<sup>16</sup>

In 1769, Father Collet revised, corrected and increased Gobillon's work but produced a new edition of the former story with only "some slightly different phrasing."<sup>17</sup>

In 1883, the Countess of Richemont succeeded in replacing in their historical setting a good number of facts in the life of the servant of God.<sup>18</sup>

The happiness of being able, more than all others, to draw from a collection of the Writings of Mademoiselle Le Gras was granted to Monseigneur Baunard in 1898. His biography to which we must refer, in spite of some deficiencies, and while awaiting the historian of the Saint, was made possible thanks to the work of classification of a Daughter of Charity, Sister Marie de Goeffre de Chabrignac.<sup>19</sup>

The life of Louise de Marillac blends with that of Saint Vincent in admirable unity, and their collaboration of extraordinary fecundity would have been less productive had it been less confident. To a great extent the pupil of Saint Vincent, Louise was to become "his greatest success."<sup>20</sup>

\* \* \*

Born on August 12, 1591, at the end of that greatly tormented sixteenth century and on the eve of that seventeenth century, so marvelous for its faith, Louise would take her place in that phalanx of heroes and heroines eager for self-sacrifice and inspired by divine ideals. However, it would only be in 1629 that she would personally enter history.

In February 1613, she married Antoine Le Gras, secretary to Queen Marie de Medici. In October of the same year, she gave birth to a son whom they named Michel-Antoine. At the end of 1624 or during the first months of 1625, Louise placed herself under the direction of Monsieur Vincent.

A few years previously, she had had the happiness of being in contact with Saint Francis de Sales, who had entrusted her soul to His Excellency Pierre Camus, bishop of Belley. After having guided her for several years, the latter found himself more and more unable to go frequently to Paris. Therefore, he directed Mademoiselle Le Gras to the one whose faithful collaborator she would become.



A widow in 1625, Louise was initiated by her director in a variety of works of charity. Little by little she was learning the Service of the Poor.

In 1629, her vocation was strengthened. She set out in order to establish, visit and organize Confraternities of Charity. In 1633, she undertook her principal work, the creation of a lasting service for the poor by founding with Saint Vincent de Paul the Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor. From that time on her life blended entirely with her works so numerous and varied that her biographer Gabillon was astounded and wrote:

It is humanly difficult to understand how this Servant of God was able to accomplish so many offices of charity, to perform, and still more seek out so many works of charity.<sup>21</sup>

All her works should be presented at the same time in somewhat of an overall tableau in order to be considered simultaneously. Since this was not possible because of the limits of our study, we were obliged to make a choice.

Setting aside in an organized apostolic life all provisional works, we chose those which, although aimed at relieving the distress of seventeenth century France, bear a lasting character and are adaptable to the needs of every century—those works which are still pursued by the Daughters of Louise de Marillac, not only in France and in Poland, as they were in the lifetime of their Founders, but by a veritable army of about 42,000 Servants of the Poor spread throughout the world.

What interested us especially was Louise de Marillac working at this organization of charity as seen through her correspondence and writings.

In the first chapter we have tried to outline the principles underlying the organization of the Service of the Sick Poor. The following chapters are devoted to its functioning in the relief of: the abandonment of infants, the ignorance of poor children, the misery of the galley slaves, the isolation of elderly people, and the suffering of the insane.



## Chapter 1

### *IN THE SERVICE OF THE POOR*

*A true Daughter of Charity  
belongs to God for the service of the poor.  
St. Louise de Marillac*

“Support, my brethren, as far as you are able, this confraternity which is devoted to the service of the unfortunate. Help these charitable Daughters, whose great glory is that of being the servants of the sick poor.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, spoke Bossuet, who on November 1, 1657, was preaching at Metz to an audience, in which some Daughters of Charity, surrounded by their poor, were present.

Three centuries later, on the eve of the canonization of Louise de Marillac, the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius XI, evoked the virtues of the Servants of the Poor, as a testimony of primary importance to the holiness of their saintly founder and mother. “Her work,” he affirmed, “has been continued by her Daughters like a true heritage and almost like a prolongation of her very life.”<sup>2</sup>

The entire organizing genius of Louise de Marillac in her charitable action is synthesized indeed in the work of the Daughters of Charity. The latter owe her the spirit and the motivating impulse which enabled “that tiny snowball,”<sup>3</sup> to which St. Vincent compared their budding company, to become a real avalanche, so prodigious has its development been.

The poor and rich alike recognized the classic silhouette of the Daughter of Charity, who cared for the poor. She was the one who crossed the city “laden with a soup pot,”<sup>4</sup> or a basket on her arm. For believers and unbelievers that silhouette was a sign of the mission which Divine Providence had confided to her.

A black bag was to replace the soup pot or classic basket. Filled with syringes and hypo needles, as well as sweets for the sick poor, it became a safeguard. It permitted a Servant of the Poor to circulate peacefully in the most miserable parts of the city and, at times, to enter dwellings of a somewhat shady reputation, for it made known the reason of her visit. People would exclaim: There must be suffering therein, a sick person

needing care, an old person seeking consolation, children to be fed or clothed.

That spectacle which appears to be a very normal thing today was judged quite otherwise by the Christians of three centuries ago. Consequently, the task which fell to Louise de Marillac in 1633, in founding the Company of the Daughters of Charity, operated a real revolution. She gave to the world those whom we may call, and justly so, the first "social workers."

### *The Work of Louise or of Vincent?*

It was an understood thing that Vincent de Paul or "Monsieur Vincent" would ever be available when Louise or "Mademoiselle Le Gras" needed him, and would never refuse her the advice she asked of him for the perfection of the work that was beginning to take shape. He would advise the Superioress, he would give instructions to the sisters on their rule of life, on the service of the poor and on the virtues of their vocation. Even absent from Paris, or when sick, he would encourage by correspondence. A reciprocal confidence so marked their relations that the organization and government of the Daughters of Charity, as well as their personal and collective formation, would greatly benefit by it. If the holy priest left the initiative to the Superioress in most cases and especially in the thousand little details of daily life, she watched vigilantly that the spirit, the doctrine and the manner of acting of St. Vincent penetrate the Company. For that reason, it has been said that "the Company of the Daughters of Charity is such as St. Vincent wanted it to be, and as Mademoiselle Le Gras fashioned it."<sup>5</sup>

### *Louise*

As early as the Feast of Pentecost 1623, the young wife of Antoine Le Gras had had a vision of a work to be created and of the director whom God was about to give her. "I was warned," she wrote,

that a time would come when I would be permitted to make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; that I would be with persons some of whom would do the same. I then understood that I would



be in a house where I might render service to my neighbor, but I could not understand how that might be possible for there was much coming and going of sisters.<sup>6</sup>

Ten years were to pass before that vision was fulfilled. Ten years of formation at the Vincentian school would be necessary before Louise de Marillac would be ready to undertake her great creative and reformatory work.

A brief sketch of that preparation may make us better understand the dominant ideas which inspired her in her formation of the Servants of the Poor.

From her very childhood, Louise manifested a marked sympathy for the needy. By her marriage, she associated herself to a family which was particularly outstanding in its love for the poor. The upkeep and the management of the household of the young wife contrasted singularly with the folly of the moment which was mostly concerned with luxury and dress. In spite of the exhortations of preachers and the indignation of moralists, people ruined themselves in the purchase of fabrics, embroidery and jewels. Mademoiselle Le Gras, on the contrary, protested by example. She dressed simply, but beneath her garments she wore a hairshirt. "At table," testified one of the servants of her household, "she pretended eating, but did not eat. At night when she believed that everyone in the house was asleep she would get up in order to withdraw to her oratory."<sup>7</sup> Her hours of leisure were spent near the unfortunate.

Having since childhood frequented a milieu of souls profoundly religious but who gave her only the rigid aspect of an austere piety, devoid of the joyous realities of the love of God, Louise became hypersensitive. A great depth of melancholy dominated her. Worries about the past, torments about the future, numerous doubts and discouragements paralyzed her.

Wife and mother, she had an extremely mortified life but was not developing as a well-rounded person. The health of her son worried her; very soon her husband became ill without hope of recovery. The vow which, in an outburst of youthful enthusiasm she had made of entering the cloister, but which she had not been able to keep because of the weakness of her constitution, seemed to her the cause of all those trials which she regarded as a punishment.



### *Vincent*

It was then, feeling very strongly the need of a constant and firm direction, that she placed herself under the direction of Monsieur Vincent, who first knew how to discover in this tormented and restless soul all the resources to be utilized in making Louise the instrument of a great work.

Widowed on December 21, 1625, she was disturbed once again by scruples and doubts. But the director whom Providence had given her, had for an entirely different motive experienced similar torments. Vincent de Paul did not forget that it was from the day on which he had promised to consecrate his life to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor that peace had been restored to him.<sup>8</sup> It would likewise be, by the poor, that he would restore peace to Louise.

With an experienced psychology, he directed her once again away from the cloistered life in which she wished to take refuge, and before thrusting her into an active life, he obliged her to control herself and to check her impetuous nature. "Imitate the passivity of the Son of God"<sup>9</sup> he would repeat constantly to his penitent who, during more than three years busied herself with the obscure tasks of charity, compatible with her family and domestic occupations.

### *The Poor*

Vincent, however, encouraged her to continue her visits to the poor, in an effort to teach her, troubled and tormented soul that she was, that it was in poverty, shared, consoled and alleviated, that she would find the secret of serene joy which she so greatly needed. In this contact with the poor, Louise learned that to be happy for others when one has reason for being sad for self, to know how to give oneself when one would like to ruminate over one's own thoughts, is a form of charity. In this contact, she would learn also, to understand well the suffering of others. And when later on, numerous souls would confide to her their inquietudes and troubles, she would know how to compassionate.

Her round of visits completed, Louise returned to her home, where it was still for the poor that she worked, at the request of Monsieur Vincent. "The work which your charity gave me is finished," she wrote to him. "if the members of Jesus Christ need it and you so desire, Father, that I should send it, I shall not fail to do so."<sup>10</sup>

Louise sometimes gave alms which she had collected, for instance,

“the sum of 50 livres” for the Confraternity of Beauvoisis.<sup>11</sup> For Villecien near Joigny, it was “a dozen shirts” which Vincent had asked her to send while he felt that “two or three shirts” were sufficient for the Confraternity of Gentilly.<sup>12</sup>

A short time later, Vincent asked her to “perform a charity for two poor girls” in order to find them some position with “honest ladies who might need them.”<sup>13</sup> That charity must have been accomplished without delay, for Louise soon received a letter of thanks for having lodged one of the girls in her own home. It was thus that Vincent by very small tasks was forming Louise for bigger ones he envisioned. Vincentian passivity did not however signify inactivity.

### *To Conquer Self in Order to Serve the Poor Better*

This restrained activity no longer satisfied Louise whose desires to serve others more completely became ever stronger. However, Vincen-tian direction made her be patient, while recommending that she keep her eyes open to needs around her. “Be then, very humble, very submissive, and full of confidence, and always wait patiently.”<sup>14</sup> The evidence of this holy and adorable Will of God, this counsel of the director, was repeated a little later: “If His Divine Majesty does not make known to you in a manner which cannot deceive that He wishes something else from you, do not think of it, and do not busy your mind with this other matter.”<sup>15</sup>

Vincent, however, broadened her field of action. In 1629, he would make use of the good will of this faithful helper, for the Confraternities of Charity being established in Paris.

“She was not satisfied,” Gobillon tells us, “to assist the sick in their homes, she went to visit them in the hospital, in order to add some sweets to the other food given them, and in order to perform for them personally, the lowest and most painful services.”<sup>16</sup> She saw the poor, their misery, their hunger, their lack of cleanliness; she encouraged other people to visit them, to relieve them, to understand their sufferings. And, little by little, as she was serving them, she felt the human sympathy in her heart evolve into a disinterested and supernatural love. This progress did not go unnoticed by her director.

Ever impatient for activity, she suffered from the imposed delay. But, by dint of keeping her desires in check she learned to be completely mistress of herself. Monsieur Vincent rejoiced over that progress. He had



had the time to study his penitent and to observe the intelligence and devotedness she brought to her activities in Paris. He was then ready to put her to work at an activity which would not depend on herself alone. A more delicate and more difficult mission was to be hers.

Too absorbed himself by multiple work, he could not give to the Confraternities of Charity in the provinces, the time, the devotedness, the advice, and the supervision which they needed.

### *Visit of the Confraternities of Charity*

On May 6, 1629, Vincent confided to Louise the visit of the Confraternities of Charity of the Provinces. "Go then, Mademoiselle, go, in the name of Our Lord."<sup>17</sup> And the first social visitor of France set out. Her previous occupations had merely been a prelude.

In 1629, she made her definitive entrance into the history of Charity. Her work had begun.

In spite of her very frail health, the new Provider of the Charities made preparations to board the coach. Vincent gave her a rule of life for the members of the Confraternities of Charity, as well as a statement of the manner in which to establish and visit the confraternities. She assumed responsibility for clothing and remedies. She paid all expenses from her personal account, and she limited them to the bare necessities in order to share more fully in the misery of the poor.

Accompanied by a servant or by a pious lady, she would set out over rough roads, lodge in poor dwellings, and travel in wretched coaches or sometimes in a wagon or on horseback.

The first place which saw Mademoiselle was Montmirail, the first stop on the journey. St. Vincent wrote to her:

It will be sufficient on your first visit to spend a day or two in each place, with the idea of returning there the following summer, if Our Lord lets you see that you might render Him some other service there. Although I say two days, your charity may take more time if the need is felt, but let me know.<sup>18</sup>

The gaps which exist in the correspondence of Louise do not permit us to follow her in all her trips. From the accounts that do exist, we know she was traveling to Asnières, on December 19, 1629;<sup>19</sup> then, in the direction of Saint-Cloud, where she remained until February 19, 1630. Worried about her health, Vincent begged her to let him know if "her



lungs were not being affected from speaking so much, and her head from so much worry and from so much noise."<sup>20</sup>

If Louise's mind was a model of balance and of solid organization, her body was never spared. That is why this worry about her health is constantly repeated in the correspondence of the director to his penitent. When in 1630, Louise was working whole-heartedly in the service of the poor people of Villepreux, St. Vincent admired the devotion of her charity, but he believed it an obligation for him to send her a golden rule of conduct by way of warning: "I fear very much that you are trying to do too much. Our Lord wishes us to serve Him with good judgment, and the contrary is called indiscretion."<sup>21</sup>

At the end of that same year he renewed his counsels of moderation with greater insistence with regard to her work at Beauvais; he wanted her to watch her health.

Oh, do take care of it, he advised her, for the love of Our Lord and of His poor members. And watch that you do not try to do too much. It is a snare of the devil by which he deceives good souls, by enticing them to do more than they are able, so that they may be reduced to doing nothing. The spirit of God incites one gently to do the good which reasonably one can do so that it might be done perseveringly and for a long time.<sup>22</sup>

Vincent did not want her to exhaust herself by making efforts out of proportion to the resources God had placed at her disposition. He wanted her to organize her daily life in such a way that she might accomplish a limited number of actions with the intention of progressing from the easier to the more difficult ones.<sup>23</sup>

Numerous would be the visits of the Confraternities of Charity made by Louise. Besides those at Montmirail, Asnières, Saint-Cloud, places already mentioned, there would be others at Sannois, Argenteuil, Franconville, Herblay, Conflans, and elsewhere. She traced a real map of charity, where from day to day, Vincent allowed her greater liberty in regulating, reforming or even founding new confraternities.

How much tact and perspicacity those visits demanded on the part of the visitor. But, from the Vincentian mold there was now stepping forth a practical woman who knew how to face details, a personality, which did not allow itself to be absorbed but which was learning how to adapt itself to the needs of the hour.

During her visits, Louise would assemble the members of the Confraternity. She would observe, she would question, she would examine the



account book, then she would give instructions, stimulate the zeal of the members, revive fervor that had grown cold, and bring to further perfection what had been established. That was not all! She would visit personally the poor in their homes, would care for the sick, would assemble young girls of the village in order to teach them the truths of the faith.<sup>24</sup> In order to keep Monsieur Vincent informed about her activities she would jot down her observations.

### *Judicious Reports*

At Sannois, for example, the burden of preparing the food for the poor sick was left entirely to the care of the treasurer. If she was too tired, she would replace this service by a monetary gift. Charity and personal contact were thus lost. Louise was justly grieved over that state of affairs. Her reaction was identical when she discovered the same abuse at Franconville. "An abuse to be corrected," she noted, "for it is detracting from the true service of the Poor."<sup>25</sup>

At Herblay, "the ladies are still in their first fervor,"<sup>26</sup> but Louise deplored the absence of any kind of account book. Details held great importance for her, and nothing escaped her vigilance.

The Confraternity of Neufville-Roy had another kind of problem. There "little enmities" separated the members of the Confraternity. According to Louise, some ladies did not wish "to be accompanied in their visits to the sick by those against whom they held some repugnance."<sup>27</sup> A different conflict plagued the Gournay Confraternity, where the people were angry and murmuring because their alms were being used in order to have Masses offered.<sup>28</sup>

The visitor's knowledge of the world and her experience of life permitted her to judge quickly and surely. The ladies of the Confraternity and the simple village girls recognized that quality in her and did not hesitate to ask her advice. By her contact, and under the impulse of her zeal, hearts were animated with a new flame.

Little by little, Louise discovered herself and conquered her personality. She showed greater initiative. The more she realized the lamentable ignorance of poor little country girls, the more she worked at establishing some sort of educational program for them. She assigned school mistresses to the villages. That initiative was one of the most original contributions of her work.<sup>29</sup>

However, her action ever remained submissive. She communicated all

undertakings of a certain importance to Vincent. He knew the difficulties involved in her work and the joys she experienced. Through his collaborator he knew the miseries of body and soul of the poor, and his intervention contributed to great success in every domain.

He also followed the spiritual progress of his Visitor. He directed her in her devotions as well as in her activities. He oriented her towards a full life based on the Gospel. A minute devotion of "33 acts in honor of the Holy Humanity of Jesus Christ" was to be replaced by simpler acts of devotion.

"Read," he advised her, "the book on the Love of God, notably the one which treats of the Will of God and Holy Indifference. As for the 33 Acts in honor of the holy humanity and others, do not trouble yourself when you miss them. God is love and He wishes that we go to Him through Love. Do not hold yourself obligated to all those good proposals."<sup>30</sup>

Her becoming more perfect was but the first result of these visits. Her keen intelligence, refined by great culture, was strengthened by trials and suffering. Her judgment and constancy of character, rare enough in a feminine soul, and her discretion were endowments not only Vincent appreciated, but which made Louise's presence felt by all those with whom she came in contact. The tactful way in which Louise handled the Ladies of Charity is not the least worthy characteristic of her work in the apostolate of the laity.

### *Louise and the Ladies of Charity*

Some of the Ladies were regular callers at Louise's house, and placed themselves under her direction in the practice of spiritual exercises. Among those, Madame Goussault was one of the first. Every year she would be the guest of Mademoiselle Le Gras.<sup>31</sup> One of her companions of the Hôtel Dieu, Mademoiselle Lamy, accompanied her. Other retreatants soon added their names to the list: Mademoiselle d'Atry, related through her mother to the de Marillac family, an actress who decided to change her way of life after one of those retreats, a young girl preparing for marriage,<sup>32</sup> Madame de Miramion who, after a retreat made at the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity, would bind herself by the vow of chastity on February 2, 1649.<sup>33</sup>

Louise had kept numerous contacts, who felt it a duty to help her. Reciprocally they addressed themselves willingly to her for help and



advice in their apostolic endeavors. Vincent also introduced her to other Ladies of Charity. Certain names turn up constantly in the writings of Louise. Madame de Miramion, Madame Goussault, Mademoiselle Lamy have already been singled out. Others were added: Mademoiselle Polalion, Mademoiselle Viole, Mademoiselle duFay, the President de Herse, Madame Seguiet, wife of the chancellor, Madame Fouquet, mother of the superintendent, the Duchess of Ventadour, and the Duchess of Liancourt, before her open profession of Jansenism had obliged Louise to break with her. The charitable elite of those times owed very much to Louise de Marillac.

### *Lady of Charity—Then Daughter of Charity*

Lady of Charity, herself, the hour was approaching in which, not without some repugnance, she was going to bring about the union of classes in perfect charity by adapting herself to the life of country girls. In this new milieu whose manner of life she shared, she would give the example of a perfection comparable to that of cloistered nuns.

In 1630, Louise expressed the desire to make a vow to devote her entire life to the service of the poor. For a long time her director had been awaiting this day. "Yes, at last, my dear Mademoiselle," he approved, "I will it. Why not? Our Lord has given you that holy sentiment, and my heart longs ardently to know how this happened. But I shall mortify myself for the love of God, with Whom I hope that yours is occupied."<sup>34</sup>

Henceforth, the letters of Vincent to Mademoiselle Le Gras offer a striking contrast. The saint now addressed himself to a wise collaborator, on whom he felt he could lean more and more. He confided to her his impressions, good or bad about the confraternities, and sometimes asked her to remedy the situations:

They need you here at the Charity of St. Sulpice, where they have made some kind of beginning, but things are going badly, according to what they tell me, and it's a pity. Perhaps God is reserving this as an occasion for you to work there.<sup>35</sup>

Vincent seemed less inclined to establish new Charities in the absence of Louise. He preferred to await her return before doing so. Thus he wrote, "I feel pressed to use the alms given us by Madame, wife of the guardian of the seals, to do what is necessary in order to establish a Charity at St. Laurent, but I shall wait until you are here before working on that."<sup>36</sup>

Prevented by some circumstance or other from seeing the officers of the Charities who asked for a meeting, he would have himself replaced by the one in whom he placed entire confidence. "Here is Madame Brou, treasurer of St. Bartholomew's," he wrote. "I do not have the opportunity of talking with her because I am in a hurry. I beg you to do so, and to look upon her as a good servant of God, worthy of some employment for His greater glory."<sup>37</sup> Another time it was a letter from Madame de Villegoube-  
lin, about which Monsieur Vincent wrote, "We shall speak about its contents after your exercises of retreat."<sup>38</sup>

The presence of Louise in the capital was felt more necessary than ever on account of the Confraternities of Charity which were multiplying. Consequently, her trips in the provinces had to become less frequent although the Confraternities still needed periodic visits in order that fervor be maintained or rekindled when relaxation had crept in. Certain failures had already been manifested, and Louise had tried to bring a remedy. She had, for example, set up a few school mistresses, but realized that the villages needed at least one permanent mistress in each place.

Obstacles of another kind were interfering with the good functioning of the Charities of the capital. Both Vincent and Louise foresaw that one of the best solutions would be to bring together a few good girls from the country in order to put them at the disposition of the Ladies in their service of the sick poor.<sup>39</sup>

### *The First Daughters of Charity*

The first of those helpers, who has already been mentioned, was only a poor, uninstructed girl who kept watch over her cows, but who will remain for centuries the ideal type of Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor. She had presented herself personally to Monsieur Vincent to be placed in the service of the sick poor in spite of her affection for the instruction of youth, because she judged that exercise of charity "more perfect and necessary."<sup>40</sup> One of St. Louise's biographers commented, "God, who places the oak in the acorn, had already placed the Daughter of Charity in this humble ancestor of the Company,"<sup>41</sup> Marguerite Naseau, who signed her life of charity with her blood by dying a victim of her devotedness near a plague-stricken victim. As if she had foreseen her death, she asked to be taken to St. Louis Hospital in order to end her life in the common ward of the poor. There she expired in the midst of them,



leaving a first and supreme example of what must be a Servant of the Poor. St. Vincent described her action in his Conference of July, 1642: "Struck with this malady, she said goodbye to the sister who was with her, as if she had foreseen her death, and went to the St. Louis Hospital, her heart full of joy and of conformity to the Will of God."<sup>42</sup>

Another good girl was presented to Monsieur Vincent by Madame Goussault. It was Marie Joly, about whose background we know nothing. Mademoiselle Le Gras ever honored her with her confidence. Monsieur Vincent was charmed by her from their very first meeting and wrote thus to Louise:

Marie answered me very affectionately and humbly that she was ready to do what you wished and in the manner that you wished. She is sorry that she lacks the necessary judgment, strength and humility to render service but is confident that if you tell her what she should do, she will be exact in following your directions. Oh, what a good girl she seems to me! Without a doubt, Mademoiselle, I think that Our Lord has given her to you Himself to make use of her through you.<sup>43</sup>

Other young girls having heard of the need of benevolent servants for the sick poor in Paris had presented themselves to Louise in the course of her tours of inspection. Scattered in the parishes of the capital, these good girls lodged either with Ladies of the Confraternity or in convents. Some succeeded, others became discouraged and abandoned the parish when it was a matter of doing some hard, down-to-earth work. The need of an organization less fragmentary was soon felt. The union of all these girls into a community under the direction of Mademoiselle Le Gras offered incontestable advantages.

### *The First House of Charity*

On November 29, 1633, three or four of these good girls were placed under the direction of Mademoiselle Le Gras in her little house near the church of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet.<sup>44</sup> A work was born. It was the Company of the Daughters of Charity. It did not seem necessary in 1633, to ask permission of the Bishop or of the King for a few servants to place themselves at the disposal of the Ladies of the city in order to help them in the service of the sick poor. It was only ten years later that steps were taken to obtain an authorization. Remembering the humble origin of the

Company, Monsieur Vincent took pleasure in saying that it was neither he nor Mademoiselle Le Gras who had thought of it.

“Do not deceive yourselves,” he told the sisters, “God alone established your Company. We never had a formal design of doing so. Oh my Daughters, I never thought of it. Your Sister Servant, Mademoiselle Le Gras never thought of it either. It was God, then, Who thought of it for you; we may say it is He Who is the author of your Company.”<sup>45</sup>

“Who then,” he asked one day, “would have had the thought of forming in the Church of God a Company of Charity made up of women and girls in secular dress? That would not have seemed possible.”<sup>46</sup> In conclusion, he said to them: “If then, my Daughters, you are asked how the Company was formed, you can answer with truth that you do not know.”<sup>47</sup>

Be that as it may, the first glimmer of light foreseen by Louise in 1623, was beginning to become quite bright. She had asked to be able to make Jesus Christ known and loved to the poor and to little ones and to serve them. This grace was granted to her, and the additional one of preparing others for this service.

### *Permanent Service of the Poor*

To become a Servant of the Poor was an extremely difficult task. In Louise’s thinking, to *serve* was quite a different thing from a hasty or occasional visit to render some needed care, to say a good word or to offer some gift, in money or in kind.

“A true Daughter of Charity,” explained Louise, “belongs to God for the service of the poor, and for that reason she must be with the poor much more than with the rich. She has rules to observe, by which she cannot lose time. When she is not engaged in the necessary visiting of the poor, she must love the company of her sisters.”<sup>48</sup>

### *Availability*

Readiness or availability was the keyword she gave to the Servants of the Poor. “It suffices that God knows that we are always ready to work when it will please Him to use us.”<sup>49</sup> They had to be ready to give and to give of themselves, ready to receive instructions, ready to make them their



own. They must be ready to stay day and night at the service of the sick poor, ready to help them in all their needs, ready to go out continually in search of the poor sick in different places, regardless of the time, the place and the weather. Behold what comprises the keyword of the service which is being organized. And Louise pointed out other virtues required.

“You must always consider yourself as subject to all others, the least and last of all, and realize that you have no authority and act accordingly. As for the Ladies of Charity, you should not consider who they might be before showing them respect. It is enough that you know that they have been received into the Company in order to honor them as Mothers of your Masters the Poor, even though they do not contribute their share.”<sup>50</sup> According to Louise, to serve the poor demands an effort which cannot be intermittent; it must be constant.

### *Quality Rather than Quantity of Subjects*

For Servants of the Poor it would be necessary to endure a hard and mortified life, much hard work, physical labor, and little human satisfaction. Although the conditions of admission were flexible enough, Vincent and Louise showed themselves to be rather strict concerning the qualities of soul and the physical strength of prospective candidates.

Louise’s correspondence shows clearly how practical she was in the matter of recruitment. She set more value on the quality of the subjects who presented themselves than on their number. It was essential that they be “good girls” desirous of serving the poor through a supernatural motive.

“We are convinced of her firm resolve to serve God and to observe the rules exactly, and she knows how to write,”<sup>51</sup> wrote Louise, concerning one of the new sisters. About another one she wrote to Monsieur l’Abbé de Vaux at Angers: “The desire that I have that there be with us only those who are truly called and who have no temporal interests in mind, makes me hesitate very strongly with regard to that subject.”<sup>52</sup>

You know, Father, how important it is not to admit into a community persons who are not suited to such a life. It seems to me that I would mistrust a subject who, for one reason or another, had no misgivings as much as one who, through human prudence, would like to know a little bit about everything, provided she would be willing to give in. Please be sure that they are not

motivated to take this step by a desire to see Paris nor for reasons of personal security. See that they are strong and healthy . . .<sup>53</sup>

On the occasion of sending away a girl from Angers who “still had the desire of seeing and tasting the world,” Louise repeated to the good priest the necessity of having girls “who are completely filled with the desire of their perfection.”<sup>54</sup>

### *Conditions for Admission*

Gradually conditions for admission were becoming more precise. They were a prelude, as it were, to the medical examinations, background inquiries, psychological evaluations and curriculum vitae, which are required of today’s social workers. A few extracts from the correspondence of Louise announce these.

1644—

We need only those who are suitable for the Company, be it both for strength of body and of soul. Get more information about them; then write to me. They should not be over 30 years of age. Try to find out about their background, from birth if possible.<sup>55</sup>

1646—

We have great need of them, but they must be very good.<sup>56</sup>

1648—

It might be well for them to come to present themselves before having them come to stay.<sup>57</sup>

1649—

Not to allow ourselves to be as much impressed by the testimony given verbally by the girls that they wish to remain in the Company as by the evidence of their corporal dispositions and contradictory actions, of which they may have given proof over a long period of time . . .<sup>58</sup>

1651—

We want neither lazy ones, nor chatterboxes, nor those who think they can use the pretext of being Daughters of Charity in order to come to Paris, but have no desire to serve God or strive after perfection, so that we end up by having to dismiss them or they leave us.<sup>59</sup>

1653—

As for those two girls, try them out very thoroughly both in body and mind because you realize that a girl with a weakness in either



is not suitable to us. Let me know what house they come from and what sort of life they have led.<sup>60</sup>

1654—

With regard to the two girls you mentioned, if you are well informed about their background and manner of life and have told them what will be expected of them and what the Rules of the House are regarding both body and soul, and if you think them suitable, let them come. . . . Impress on them that they are coming to try out our way of life and to be tested. Please have them bring enough money to cover the expense of their first habit and of their trip here and back home, if necessary.<sup>61</sup>

1658—

. . . It's extremely important that theirs be a true vocation because we have learned through experience that some girls use this pretext as an opportunity to come to Paris in the hope that if they are without home, they'll find a good job.<sup>62</sup>

1659—

I had asked you to tell me the age, the state of mind and body of those good postulants, and what they know how to do. I need to know all that before I can give you an answer.<sup>63</sup>

1659—

With regard to that girl, you need to give us a little more information. Don't be in a hurry to accept her but give her a thorough testing.<sup>64</sup>

1660—

We need girls with good dispositions and with a genuine desire to acquire the perfection of true Christians. They must wish to die to themselves by mortification and renunciation so that the spirit of Jesus may abide in them and give them perseverance in this completely spiritual life. Although they may be continually employed in exterior works, which appear lowly and despicable in the eyes of the world, they must be convinced that these works are glorious in the sight of God and His angels.<sup>65</sup>

This manner of looking at things was shared, if not inspired by St. Vincent. In a famous conference he could find nothing better than to remind the sisters of the spirit of good village girls, "simple, humble, without ambition, sober, pure, poor, and obedient,"<sup>66</sup> a spirit typical of their vocation. That conference is one of the most famous of the Saint, and should, according to the testimony of Monsignor Calvet, "figure in

an anthology dedicated to the glory of the French peasant woman, who remains close to nature, that most marvelous of educators."<sup>67</sup>

The admission of postulants was the object of numerous letters of Mademoiselle Le Gras to Monsieur Vincent for advice and ultimate decisions. No admission was considered final before having been decided in common. Here are a few examples taken from a multitude of others which give evidence of that:

"Here is a good girl who comes from a distance of 32 leagues in order to see if she might be suitable for the Confraternity of Charity," wrote Monsieur Vincent, "I beg you to consider her."<sup>68</sup>

"As for that good girl from Argenteuil who is melancholic," he wrote on another occasion, "I think that you are right in making it rather difficult to accept her, for melancholy is a very strange thing."<sup>69</sup>

Louise wrote to him in her turn: "Good Sister Jeanne from Saint Benoît has just brought me three girls from Colombe, of very good dispositions, who have a great desire to serve the poor wherever we may send them; I believe they will be seeing you soon."<sup>70</sup>

Just as the Superioress refused those who did not show the requisite dispositions, she did likewise with regard to girls who were too young. She wished to be assured of their motives. With great regret she had to send some away in 1641, although she found them "very good girls, but not ready to render all the services which the poor need."<sup>71</sup>

Elsewhere she wrote, "We are dismissing little Elizabeth, having judged for her good that it would not be suitable to receive her as one of our sisters on account of her youth, of body and mind."<sup>72</sup> By way of exception she admitted having received a girl who was quite young, on the recommendation of one of the sisters, but she could not refrain from confiding to the latter "what makes me fear a little is that she is very young."<sup>73</sup>

The ideas of Louise on this point, like those of Vincent, were opposed to the practice popular at that time. We see for example, Jacqueline Arnaud made responsible for the abbey of Port-Royal when she was only 11 years of age.<sup>74</sup> It must be remembered that the power which parents exercised over their children with regard to their choice of cloister or husband played a great part in that practice.



### *Non-Acceptance*

The judicious choice of members of the Company on the part of Louise often obliged her motherly heart to suffer greatly but her love of the Company triumphed over her natural inclinations. When a girl was judged too young for the service of the poor but who showed a good spirit, Louise made efforts to find a good position for her: "When she will have worked three or four years, if God gives her the will and the desire to serve among us, we shall accept her. It will be better if she expresses her desire when she is of age to do so than to come now when she doesn't yet know what she wants."<sup>75</sup>

### *Given to God in Full Activity*

The need for careful screening of those who sought admission was all the greater because theirs was not the life of religious protected from the world by a cloister grating. On the contrary, public opinion had to be formed about these women from among the common people who, while living in community, moved about freely through the streets of the capital and the environs, taking care of the sick poor in their homes and bringing relief to all kinds of misery. At that epoch, to say religious was to say cloistered. The prejudices of the century did not tolerate any deviations from that. Experience gave proof to that fact.

### *Other Religious . . . All of Them Cloistered*

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, six or seven foundations of Ursulines were established in France. However, the "Seculars" of Angela Merici, after having been "the Congregates" of Charles Borromeo, became in Paris, as early as 1612, cloistered nuns in the strictest sense of the word.<sup>76</sup>

When St. Francis de Sales founded the Daughters of the Visitation a few years later, he had in mind a community devoted principally to the visiting of the poor in their homes. He had to renounce that project when Archbishop de Marquemont of Lyons opposed it because he feared that disorder might come about with time. The Visitation was established in 1617, but also "on condition of a perpetual cloister."<sup>77</sup>

It is true that as early as the fourteenth century there were in the

northern part of France some religious of the Third Order Regulars of St. Francis of Assisi, such as the *Soup Sisters* or Grey Nuns, and the *Celle Sisters* or Black Nuns, who cared for the sick in their homes as well as in the hospitals, without any other motive than "the pure love of God and the spiritual salvation of their neighbor."<sup>78</sup> It seems, however, that the same current of radical claustration manifested itself in the seventeenth century with both hospital congregations as well as teaching orders. Helyot cites the example of the Hospitallers of the Third Order of Franciscans of Beauvais being cloistered in 1627,<sup>79</sup> and that the Hospitallers of Laval met the same fate a few years later.<sup>80</sup>

Those communities had then ceased their exterior ministry or else they were so little known that they were ignored. That is why the foundation of the Daughters of Charity destined for the service of the Sick Poor was considered an innovation. St. Vincent himself believed it to be so, if we are to judge from his conferences to the Daughters of Charity. He attributes to them, "The happiness of being the first called to this holy exercise, you, poor village girls and daughters of artisans. Since the time of the women who served the Son of God and the apostles, no such establishment has existed in the church."<sup>81</sup>

Another day he asked them: "Who has ever heard of such a work until now? Many religious orders have been seen, hospitals have been founded for the assistance of the sick, religious have devoted themselves to their service, but never until now have there been any for the care of the sick in their own rooms. If in a poor family someone was sick, it was necessary to separate the husband from his wife, the wife from her children, the father from his family. Until now, dear God, you had not provided for their care, and it seems that Your adorable Providence which watches out for everyone had not been concerned for them."<sup>82</sup>

### *Religious or Seculars?*

St. Vincent was not alone in affirming this fact. The Procurator General to whom Louise addressed herself in order to obtain approbation for their Institute, which had already been functioning for 17 years, called it "one without precedent."<sup>83</sup> However, he told the Superioress that he did not disapprove of their plans.

In fact, bishops, pastors and magistrates had in their experience no category in which to place this new work. Therefore, a word of explanation and approbation was necessary each time that a new establishment



was being considered. As proof of this we have a letter of Mademoiselle Le Gras in which she asks, "Would it not be suitable to propose to the administrators that they ask the Bishop of Angers if he would approve the service and the dwelling of our sisters at the hospital . . . so that the priests might not decide to make religious of them."<sup>84</sup>

To sisters sent to the provinces, Monsieur Vincent gave the answer which they could give to the bishop were he to ask if they were religious:

You will tell him that you are not, by the grace of God, and that it is not because you do not esteem religious very highly, but that if you were, it would be necessary for you to be enclosed and that consequently it would be necessary to say: 'Farewell to the service of the poor.' Tell him that you are poor Daughters of Charity who have given yourselves to God for the service of the poor, and that it is permissible for you to withdraw and also to be sent away.<sup>85</sup>

Louise manifested the same solicitude and care in protecting their "secular family."

Please warn me, she wrote to Monsieur de Vaux, if in this first article of the rules of our sisters there is something which indicates a regular community different from that of Angers, for that was never my intention. On the contrary, I saw Monsieur the Vicar two or three times in order to make him understand that we are but a secular family and that bound together by the Confraternity of Charity, we have Monsieur Vincent, Superior of these Confraternities for our director. He then made the Archbishop of Nantes understand the nature of our establishment, which the latter approved so greatly that he signed the approbation with the gentlemen of the city.<sup>86</sup>

Three months before her death, Louise wrote to Monsieur Vincent:

A few delicate spirits in the Company show some repugnance regarding the word *Confraternity* and would prefer society or community. I took the liberty of saying that that word was essential to us and could greatly help to strengthen our position so that there would be no innovation for us because the expression means *secularity*. Since Providence willed that we add Society or Company, it was to teach us that we must live a regulated life by observing the rules we received when our Confraternity was established, and in the manner they were explained to us.<sup>87</sup>



More than 20 years of efforts had been necessary in order to triumph over the resistance of public opinion, over the objections of parliament and over the worries of the clergy. Finally, thanks to the wise and strong precautions taken by St. Vincent and St. Louise, a new form of religious life was becoming established without weakening or dulling traditional forms. What seemed essentially contradictory was being realized, i.e., an interior life for those engaged in uninterrupted exterior activity. Louise did not, however, think of exulting over the prodigious advance she was assuring to the apostolate of women; on the contrary, she continued to dedicate herself to others.<sup>88</sup>

For some years now the Holy See has shown a great interest in certain Catholic associations founded for various purposes but which are neither religious congregations nor societies living in common. Their members live in the world, practice the evangelical counsels of perfection and devote themselves entirely to an apostolate in the world.<sup>89</sup> It is interesting to note that three centuries before the Secular Institutes, Louise de Marillac had begun a form of life in which the members were entirely given to God for the service of the poor in the midst of the world, from which she did not separate her Daughters. She launched them, as it were, "in full battle" because there existed "everywhere discord, everywhere hatred, everywhere war, everywhere misery, everywhere hunger, and everywhere death."<sup>90</sup>

To those who pointed out the dangers of this new society, which the walls of monasteries no longer protected, Vincent replied that the Sisters would have to be more virtuous than religious in their cloisters. Nor did he lose any opportunity of speaking to the sisters about the dangers which might weaken their interior life as well as about the ways of avoiding them. He told them:

Whoever says religious says cloistered and the Daughters of Charity should go everywhere. That is why, Sisters, although you are not enclosed, you must be as virtuous as, and even more than, the Daughters of Saint Marie. And why? Because they are enclosed. When a religious would like to do something wrong, the grille is closed; she cannot; the occasion of doing wrong is removed. But there are none who go about the world as much as Daughters of Charity and who have as many occasions of doing evil as you, Sisters. That is why it is most important for you to be more virtuous than religious. And if there is one degree of perfection for persons living in a Religious Order, Daughters of



Charity need two, because you run a great risk of losing yourselves if you are not virtuous.<sup>91</sup>

At another time he said to them: "Well now, Sisters, take the resolution of never allowing men to enter your rooms, which are a place of delight. God takes His pleasure in looking at a Daughter of Charity who keeps to her room, and He takes pleasure in being alone there with His spouse."<sup>92</sup>

Vincent upheld that idea against everything and everyone, and he imposed it. Louise, who always seconded his efforts, wrote to the sisters at Richelieu:

Do you remember frequently the reminder that our Most Honored Father gave us in one of his conferences that we have a cloister as well as religious, and that it is as difficult for souls faithful to God to withdraw from it as for religious from theirs? Although our cloister is not built of stones but of holy obedience, it should regulate all our desires and actions. I beg Our Lord, whose example has enclosed us in this holy cloister that He might give us the grace of never being unfaithful to it.<sup>93</sup>

Louise objected to a proposition for semi-cloister as "a manner so very dangerous for the continuation of the work of God, which, Most Honored Father, your charity has upheld with so much firmness against all opposition."<sup>94</sup>

Louise was untiring in her work for the formation of the sisters. She was as solicitous for their practice of the Christian virtues proper to their salvation as for their competence in professional duties. She contributed greatly in converting the Vincentian formula:

"The Daughters of Charity will have:  
for monastery the homes of the sick,  
for cell a rented room,  
for chapel the parish church,  
for cloister the streets of the city or wards of the hospitals,  
for enclosure obedience,  
for grille the fear of God,  
and for veil holy modesty . . ."<sup>95</sup>

Since restraints of an exterior discipline were lacking, the daily practices of the Daughters of Charity were all the more essential. Clothed like the women of the lower class, they did not yet wear the imposing cornette that was to become a familiar sight. A simple white toquois that hid their hair was the habitual headgear. It was only in 1646, that Louise suggested to Vincent that "the sisters wear a cornette of white cloth which might

protect the face against the inclemency of the great cold and the great heat."<sup>96</sup> The white cornette with wings falling over the shoulders was permitted but not imposed for uniformity until the year 1685.<sup>97</sup>

### *A Rule Which Lasts throughout the Centuries*

The absence of cloister required a number of instructions destined to safeguard the virtue of the sisters. There was no question of definite rules—that would come after years of practice for one must go about it “very simply.”<sup>98</sup> What was needed were simple suggestions and prescriptions tailored to the needs of good country girls.

The Daughter of Charity was to be recognized less by the rules she kept than by the spirit which animated her, a Christian spirit drawn from the Gospel. Louise carefully pointed out to her sisters what the aim of their service should be:

“We must have continually before our eyes our model, which is the exemplary life of Jesus Christ. We are called to imitate Him not only as Christians, but as having been chosen by God to serve Him in the person of the poor.”<sup>99</sup>

To serve the poor is to serve God! Behold the foundation of the formation of a servant of the poor. Vincent had taught this to Louise, who in her turn wished to engrave that ideal in the heart of her Daughters before sending them forth into their fields of activity.

“Oh, my dear Sisters,” she said, “it is not enough to be Daughters of Charity in name, and it is not enough to be in the service of the poor sick . . . you must possess the true and solid virtues which you know are essential if you are to accomplish well the work in which you are so happy to be employed. Otherwise, Sisters, your work would be practically useless.”<sup>100</sup>

She expressed the great desire of her heart to see them “all saints in order to be able to work effectively for God. It is not enough to go and to give, but we must have a heart purged of all self-interest. We must never cease practicing mortification of all our senses and passions.”<sup>101</sup>

Louise could speak thus since she was given over to prayer and convinced of her own nothingness. That is what explains the power of her words and of her works. If she had not been a woman of deep interior life, a saint, her work would have preceded or accompanied her to the grave. It was then the union of the interior and the exterior life, until then distinct, at least with women, that she asked of her Daughters.



The audacity of that innovation is difficult for us to conceive today. Therefore, that they might be equal to the task required of them, Louise tried to make the sisters conscious of the greatness of their vocation which, when lived in a spirit of faith, would give them patience in every trial and help them to see the smallest details of each day through the lens of charity.

### *Employment of the Day*

A daily horarium was drawn up. It took into account the needs of the sisters and the works in which they were employed. It was not a rigid structure since their golden rule was to “prefer the Service of the Poor to every other exercise, corporal or spiritual.”<sup>102</sup> Monsieur Vincent reminded them that “Charity takes priority over all rules.” To that effect, the sisters were to subordinate even prayer if it were necessary. Louise would repeat to them the Vincentian formula: “You leave God for God when you leave one of your spiritual exercises to go to serve the poor.”<sup>103</sup>

Mademoiselle made them understand that they must not use that maxim as an excuse to indulge any kind of whim. Leaving God for God had to be motivated by well-regulated charity. She wrote, “We must be most exact to our little rules without slighting the poor, whose service must be preferred to all else, but in an orderly way and not as whims dictate.”<sup>104</sup>

### *Cult of the Poor in Whom God Lives*

At the school of Service of Louise, the Love of the Poor was a science which headed the curriculum. It was a science par excellence for those who, in the name of Jesus Christ, are concerned about the whole human person.

First of all, she communicated to her Daughters the fire of her own love of the poor, a love which had its profound source in the Love of Christ. It was that love which enabled her to mingle with humble village girls with whom she must have had difficulty in finding common interests. It was that love which made her follow their way of life, share their poverty and their fatigue. It was that love which in detaching her heart

little by little from the world and from herself, taught her the cult and understanding of the poor. It was the admirable maxim of the Apostle St. Paul, "Caritas Christi urget nos," (II Cor.v.14) that she wished to take as example and as rule of her entire life and of all her works, and which she gave as motto to her Daughters. The remains of sealing wax on her letters and of wax which served to close them reveal that she had begun, as early as 1644, to imprint what was to become the traditional seal of the Company: a heart surrounded by burning flames, in the midst of which is a figure of Jesus Christ crucified, and around which is the inscription: "Caritas Christi urget nos."

Inspired by her great charity, as Bossuet was by his genius, Louise taught her Daughters the same doctrine as the great orator did on the eminent dignity of the poor. She referred to them as their Lords and Masters.

### *Scrupulously Careful with Regard to Money*

Numerous are Louise's exhortations on the necessity of managing well the goods of the poor. On one occasion she wrote, "In the name of God take care of the goods of the poor to the best of your ability and see that the sisters do this with affection. I am sure that you must keep an account of your receipts and expenses as exactly as possible."<sup>105</sup> To a sister who replaced another one in the hospital she wrote, "I think you will find sister's papers because she knows how important order is in a hospital. I would be greatly mistaken if she failed to write the name, country of origin, date of entrance and discharge, and death of the patients, as well as receipts and expenses."<sup>106</sup> In her instructions, as well as in her letters, Louise advises, "To wrap the clothing and money of the poor, if they have any, in the place destined for that purpose. Enter all contents in the register and mark them well in order to return everything to them, if they should get better."<sup>107</sup> Already we have what will become a current listing of clothing and inventory of hospitals.

An extract from her "Advices" gives the reason for her multiple references to the scrupulous care of money:

As most of those who enter the Company are not accustomed to conversing with people of condition or people of rank, and to have the handling of money and of the many little things now at their disposal, it is to be feared that they might begin to get used



to being with people of rank to the extent that they might abuse this privilege. They will then lose the respect they owe them, even so far as to make themselves insupportable. The handling of money might make them decide to appropriate it to themselves and to make use of it according to their curiosity.<sup>108</sup>

Louise counseled them to excuse themselves from the task, "if others wished to charge them with the administration of the temporal goods of the poor, and to exempt themselves, as far as they were able, from touching any money at all to be distributed to the poor, but to encourage benefactors to distribute it themselves."<sup>109</sup>

### *Management of Time*

She included the time of the Servant of the Poor among the goods of the poor. By her vocation a sister was obliged to give it entirely. A loss of time is a failure in service: "You must work, not only in order to earn your living, as your Masters do, but also to help to nourish them."<sup>110</sup> And Vincent added, "You have a right only to food and clothing; the surplus belongs to the service of the poor."<sup>111</sup>

### *Poverty*

If it was so important for St. Vincent to maintain the Daughters in a spirit of service and of poverty, it was a concern shared by Louise. Through her own experience she had come to know that only poverty can relieve poverty. She applied herself to make the sisters understand that, as well as the true meaning of charity.

"You bear the quality of servants of the poor," she told them, "it would not be just that the servants become wealthier than their masters."<sup>112</sup>

When they were looking for living quarters for a new establishment, she encouraged them "to choose a lodging suitable for poor girls."<sup>113</sup> The instructions which she sent to an architect are inspired by her devotion to holy poverty:

Monsieur, she wrote, it is absolutely necessary that the building appear rustic and as simple as possible . . . if you reflect on the need for the Company to continue to thrive, you will see that it

must appear poor and humble in all things. You will clearly see that it is God's work.<sup>114</sup>

In order to perpetuate that spirit of poverty in the community, she pointed out to St. Vincent "that it seemed necessary that the rule should oblige the sisters to live always a poor, simple and humble life, for fear that if they were established in a way of life that required great expense, they would be obliged to seek ways of maintaining that life style."<sup>115</sup>

Poverty became then a prerequisite condition for a Servant of the Poor to participate in the apostolate of charity. "If you preserve that spirit," St. Vincent assured them, "charity will flourish."<sup>116</sup>

Thanks to the spirit of poverty and of Christian simplicity that Louise inculcated in her Daughters, strong and lasting bonds were forged between vice that degrades and the purity of "good girls," between poverty and the social condition of the Ladies of Charity. The union of classes was being brought about at the bedside of the sick poor.

A woman of prayer and a woman of action, Louise had great experience of souls and of material things. Guided by her innate psychological sense, she understood the mentality of her girls. Good, sincere, robust, and of good will, they were for the most part uninstructed.

"It would be temerity," she made them understand, "to undertake anything without knowing how one should go about it in order to do it well."<sup>117</sup> It is good to love the Service of the Poor, but one must also know how to serve.

### *Professional Formation*

A professional formation, rudimentary at first, became gradually more developed under her guidance. She understood the requirements and qualifications of a nurse of the seventeenth century. Those can in no way be compared with modern standards. Bleedings, purgations and poultices constituted the ordinary practice of the period. Molière's satirical "Saigner, purgare et clysterium donare!" seems in no way to exaggerate reality according to the testimony of Dr. Gaudeul, who saw therein "the A.B.C. of the official seventeenth-century therapeutic methods."<sup>118</sup>



### *Home Nurse*

The correspondence of Louise, from which we extract a few excerpts, was a faithful mirror of the medical mentality of the period. It also shows her very capable of instructing others.

"I beg of you, Sister," she wrote, "to teach our sister how to bleed. Teach her especially how to avoid arteries, nerves and other vulnerable areas. Remember that should you suspect that you have opened an artery, draw forth a great quantity of blood and place a coin in the compress in order to make the ligature."<sup>119</sup> A letter written in 1658, states "that the best time for a blood-letting for older people is during the full moon. For laxatives, the waning moon is best, so that the evacuation won't be too violent."<sup>120</sup>

As a hygienic precaution against the plague epidemic, to which were exposed the sisters who were caring for the wounded soldiers at Calais, she ordered that "a few roots of chicory with a little bayberry be boiled. It is a quick-acting remedy but very distasteful to the taste if not accompanied a little by the thought of the bitter beverage offered to Our Lord on the cross."<sup>121</sup> To another sister Louise advised her "not to go to visit the sick without rubbing her nose as well as her temples with a little vinegar."<sup>122</sup>

Among her recommendations for the sisters employed in the villages, we cite the following passage:

They will take care not to bleed or to purge without need, for fear of the dangers that might result. For that reason, as soon as they are called to go to visit the sick, they should greet them cordially and approach them in a joyful manner and with good will. They should then inquire about the length of their illness, and begin their remedies by enemas or by bleeding, when they observe some repugnance. If the fever continues, they should repeat their remedy three or four times. When there is a persistent chronic fever, they should bleed the foot and then bleed the arm again until the fever goes down. When the fever is intermittent and alternates with chills, they should administer a laxative potion. However, they should guard against giving any remedy during the time of chills or perspiration, except a glass of water in which they have dissolved a small amount of theriac, and which they should administer shortly before the chill takes over.<sup>123</sup>

Louise always indicated very minutely the method of employing the

medications she sent so that they might obtain the best results. "It's a little licorice from which we make the tisane. I'm sending you a few small pieces of it to make it a little easier for you to use. It must be fresh, so cut only what you need because it blackens quickly."<sup>124</sup>

For one of the sisters who was sick, Louise felt that there would be no danger "in making her take some of that water, but not the strong kind, in case her illness is not from the lungs. I believe that a half a glass of that water with the juice of an orange will do her a great deal of good after she has fasted. Add a little sugar, and in the evening serve it like a julep."<sup>125</sup>

She recommended Cornachin powder as being especially good for "children and older persons. It does not upset the stomach and it draws off fluids without dehydrating the body."<sup>126</sup>

Her attention to detail is noteworthy in the following prescription in which she limits to "24 grains of Cornachin powder or senna, about the weight of two coins, or an infusion of our good peach blossom syrup."<sup>127</sup>

The care of the sick in their homes being the principal work of the Servants of the Poor, it was necessary that they know something about the medical remedies of their time in order to be effective in their profession.

Unfortunately, all the sisters were not able to acquire the needed aptitudes. Louise's letter gives evidence of that: "I do not believe that you should try to teach our sister, nor allow that she learn how to bleed. She is not capable of that, and I would not like to expose anyone to her attempts."<sup>128</sup>

There were others of the same caliber, for instance Sister Charlotte, "a good girl for work but rather simple. It would require several years to make her capable of serving the poor."<sup>129</sup> Elsewhere Louise excused herself for not having "a person suitable"<sup>130</sup> to send to relieve an overburdened sister. Again she remarked having great difficulty in choosing even a few for the establishments."<sup>131</sup>

There were others who could learn but a part of the necessary knowledge. They were rather a source of annoyance to the Ladies and provoked strong remonstrances as they clamored for "girls who knew how to serve and prepare the medications and remedies."<sup>132</sup>

Theoretical instruction was certainly not neglected, but no teaching in the professional formation of the Servant of the Poor was so profitable as the visit to the poor. Visiting the poor in their homes was the method adapted from the very beginning, if we are to judge from the following account given by Monsieur Vincent:



About that time the Ladies of St. Savior, because they were women of rank, were looking for a girl who might be willing to carry the soup pot to the sick. A poor girl came to see Mademoiselle Le Gras, was asked what she knew, where she came from, and if she was willing to serve the poor. She accepted willingly. She came then to St. Savior's. They taught her how to administer medicines and to render all necessary services, and she succeeded very well.<sup>133</sup>

### *Moral Formation*

Beginners were initiated little by little in the manner of approaching the sick poor while helping older members. By dint of necessity they learned how to "support one another, to be cordial and submissive, while maintaining a spirit of kindness and charity."<sup>134</sup> That was necessary in order to help them exercise "great gentleness toward the poor and great respect toward the priests, doctors and Ladies of Charity. If we didn't act in that way, I warn you that we would become so insolent that the Ladies would be forced to get rid of us."<sup>135</sup>

Respect and obedience "to each one according to his office,"<sup>136</sup> was a constant reminder. According to Louise, that respect was due not only to those in office but to everyone. She commented, "to the poor because they are our masters; to the rich because they provide us the means of doing good to the poor."<sup>137</sup>

Actual experience in caring for the sick was the pedagogical method most frequently used. Louise put her sisters on guard against the dangers of "a little knowledge" which might lead them to undertake too much. She wrote, "Do not let the habit of taking care of the sick, nor what you have learned from the doctors make you become too forward and independent to the point of not carrying out the doctor's prescriptions or of obeying the orders given . . . What do we have that has not been given to us? And what do we know that has not been taught us?"<sup>138</sup>

Habits, however, are only acquired slowly, and work cannot wait. It was necessary to place sisters at the bedside of the sick before the end of their professional training. When that was necessary, Louise would assign the unexperienced one to assist a well-prepared sister-nurse. She would ask the latter to "train the sister in the act of compounding herbs as she already knows how to prepare the medications and other remedies. We

would find it difficult to train anyone on such short notice."<sup>139</sup> To another sister she entrusted the supervision of the sisters who served the sick in the parish of Saint Laurent. "They are to render an account to you of the manner in which they serve the poor, of their conduct toward the Ladies, if they are careful to give the latter an account of their work, and especially if they prepare their medicines carefully and take care of their drugs."<sup>140</sup>

The education of the sisters continued thus, on the spot and by correspondence, daily and over the years. Everything served as matter of instruction.

Louise followed closely the progress of the sisters in the provinces. She was filled with solicitude for them. "If you need scalpels, please let me know,"<sup>141</sup> she wrote. Another time, she let them know that she was sending them "syringes by the duchess."<sup>142</sup>

Louise would encourage and give advice, for her motherly heart understood "that changes are always difficult and that it takes time to learn new customs and the manner of serving the poor well and properly."<sup>143</sup>

Her discreet but active supervision followed her Daughters throughout the various stages of their development, in such a manner as to prevent deviations and to correct errors. Counsels such as the following are frequently given in the saint's writings:

As for your conduct with the sick, oh, let it never be in an acquired manner but rather in a very affectionate one, speaking to them and serving them wholeheartedly. Inquire very particularly about their needs and speak to them with kindness and compassion. Procure for them whatever they need without being importunate or hasty, especially in what concerns their eternal salvation. Never leave a poor person without having said a kind word to him.<sup>144</sup>

To the sisters in villages where there were no doctors, she recommended to them, "go see for yourselves the needs of the poor," and according to their illnesses to apply the appropriate remedy such as, "bleedings, enemas or medications."<sup>145</sup> The sisters of the parishes, on the contrary, were to administer remedies "in the manner and at the times ordered by the doctor."<sup>146</sup>

Obviously, the sisters visited their sick regularly since they were responsible for following exactly the orders given by the doctor and for rendering an account of any complications that might have resulted. They were required to watch their sick in a manner similar to that of nurses working at a hospital.



### *Hospital Nurse*

The transfer from service of the poor in their homes to service of the poor in hospitals was then quite natural.

Although hospital work did not seem to have been envisioned in their foundation, it devolved on the Daughters of Charity to a certain extent at the Hôtel Dieu of Paris in 1634,<sup>147</sup> and completely in Angers in 1640.

The contract which was signed by Mademoiselle Le Gras in the Hospital of Angers was “a masterpiece of reason and feeling.”<sup>148</sup> By it the Daughters of Charity, until then the helpers of the Ladies of Charity, accepted to take over the entire charge of a hospital. That action had a much greater influence perhaps than either Louise or Vincent had foreseen.

Even today throughout the world, thousands of hospitals are entrusted to the Daughters of Charity and prosper by the application of the rules and principles implemented by Louise de Marillac at Angers.<sup>149</sup>

When the administrators of the establishment had asked for sisters to serve the hospital, neither Louise’s illness nor the warning she heard about the pestilence that ravaged in the city and its environs could deter her from undertaking the journey to Angers. She knew that a complete reform was necessary there where “Many deficiencies and disorders existed in the service of the poor and the management of their goods.”<sup>150</sup> A Memoir of 1675, preserved in the National Archives of France, refers to that situation:

“There were then about thirty or forty sick, at the arrival of the sisters, and three dozen shirts in all. There were very few poor; those of the city would not allow themselves to be brought to the hospital. . .”

After having spent about twenty days there, Louise was able to return to Paris because the work of the hospital was organized. But from the capital she and Saint Vincent would watch all that was happening in that foundation.

An excerpt from Louise’s rule suffices to show the Christian and maternal manner in which the Servant of the Poor was to greet her masters, the sick poor:

The one in charge of putting the sick to bed will receive them, after they have seen a priest, and she will receive them in the spirit indicated in the rule, with the thought in mind that she is their servant and they are her lords and masters. She will keep some hot water in the little kitchen which she will use to wash

their legs. Then she will change their gowns and give them little caps when there are any at the hospital. She will take care when they are sick in bed, to lock up their clothing and money, if they have any, and then she will prepare some broth for them as soon as possible.<sup>151</sup>

At the St. Marie of Angers hospital, 3,000 sick are still cared for by the Servants of the Poor, who continue to render respectful and diligent care.

Following charity wherever it led them, the Daughters of Louise saw their field of activity widen considerably. At the time of the Fronde, at Chalons, at St. Menehould, at Calais, and at Arras, the wounded soldiers also became their "lords and masters." The spirit of the Daughters of Charity was formed in actual service. In spite of the variety of works to which they devoted themselves, the sisters, thanks to their Foundress, knew how to preserve essentials while modifying the accessories of established customs and precepts. Their apostolate has ever been inspired by the circumstances of time and of places.

### *Definitive Rules*

Louise saw to what the spiritual life of unexperienced young sisters was exposed. She further recognized that they would be more faithful to the observance of Rules, whose value and necessity they understood. That, in part, explains why written rules were drafted only after years of faithful observance. Even today details of the rule are adapted to necessities as they arise. Based on the overall needs of the poor, these Rules aim at fostering a practical and effective devotedness, which is none other than the fruit of the supernatural affection which every Daughter of Charity should have for her lords and masters.

### *Unity of Direction*

To guarantee the perpetuity of the work and its stability, there only remained the drawing up of constitutions and regulations for the proper functioning of the Institute. Frequently Louise remarked to Vincent that the unity of the Company would be ruined if the spirit of the foundation



was subjected to the influence of persons of divers points of view. She saw but one solution: that Monsieur Vincent should be the Superior of the Daughters of Charity for life, and that after his death the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, who would preserve his spirit, should take charge of their direction.<sup>152</sup> Louise saw this as the means of giving to the body of the Institute a soul capable of vivifying it throughout the centuries, in spite of the profound upheavals and persecutions that beset society in every age. Through her undertakings and her perseverance in attaining that end, Louise de Marillac assured to her Daughters the same help and counsels they needed and to the Company the survival of the same spirit.

*Louise's Last Words: "Take Good Care of the Service of the Poor"*

The thought of improving and of perpetuating the Service of the Poor preoccupied Louise to the very last moments of her life. The last of her letters is dated February 2, 1660. Two days later, she was forced to go to bed, never to get up again. In all probability then, the advice she addressed to Sister Jeanne of the Cross is the last of her writings. It is permeated with the predominant thought of her life. She was to repeat for a last time, "Our exterior actions, although they may be performed for the service of the poor, cannot be very pleasing to God nor merit reward for us if they are not united with those of Our Lord, who always worked in the presence of His Father."<sup>153</sup>

On March 15, 1660, between eleven o'clock and noon, Louise de Marillac rendered her soul to God. Scarcely able to speak, she nevertheless found the strength to bequeath to her Spiritual Daughters the supreme desire of her heart, "Take good care of the Service of the Poor."<sup>154</sup> Her obsequies were carried out according to the wish she had expressed in her will.<sup>155</sup> She wished no other expense than that which was incurred for the burial of every Daughter of Charity. She had protested that "if they acted otherwise, it would be to declare her unworthy of dying as a true Sister of Charity and servant of the members of Jesus Christ, although she esteemed nothing more glorious for herself, than that title."<sup>156</sup>

*First Servants of the Poor*

Many pages would be necessary to evoke, even in a little way, the life of the first Daughters of Charity formed in the school of Louise and Vincent. The devotedness, heroism, sanctity, and other virtues of those "good girls" contain something which surpasses our admiration. Monsieur Vincent himself was overjoyed to see to what an extent they associated the feeling of privilege and honor with their service of the poor. He often quoted to the Ladies of Charity the words little Sister Andree had uttered on her death bed. "I told the Ladies of Sister Andree's reply to a question I asked her: 'I have no regret, no remorse, other than perhaps having taken too great pleasure in serving the poor.' And when I said to her, 'But, Sister, isn't there anything in your past which frightens you,' she replied, 'No, Sir, nothing at all, unless I felt too much satisfaction when I used to go through the villages to see those dear people. I used to fly, so full of joy was I in serving them.'"<sup>157</sup>

On another day, it delighted Monsieur Vincent to relate the adventure of one of the good girls whose life had been endangered, when one of the walls of a house she was visiting crumbled and crushed about forty persons. The onlookers shouted to her to jump into their arms, but the sister "first of all handed down her soup kettle which they grasped with a hook at the end of a fair-sized pole. Then, relying on the mercy of Divine Providence, she threw herself down on cloaks which were stretched out for her."<sup>158</sup> Out of danger, what did she do? . . . "Trembling all over, she set out to serve the rest of her poor." What a sublime act!

Servants of the Poor, that was their title. Their time and their devotedness belonged to the needy. Saint Vincent and Saint Louise insisted strongly on that duty, which one day was to become the first article in their Common Rules.

Richelieu's niece, the Duchess of Aiguillon, had used all her influence in order to have a Servant of the Poor in her service. Monsieur Vincent and Louise deliberated a long time before sending her one, but on condition that the sister might devote a part of her time to the poor of the parish. Choice was then made of little Marie Denyse, but the latter could not resign herself to accepting. "I left my father and mother in order to give myself to the service of the poor," she replied, "nothing will change my decision. Excuse me if I am not able to place myself at the service of that great lady."<sup>159</sup>

Barbe Angiboust was then considered. "Big tears rolled down Barbe's



cheeks; that was her only answer.”<sup>160</sup> However, she left with the assurance that she would be in the company of a person who loved the poor very much and that “if after four or five days, you continue to desire to return to Saint Nicholas, you will be taken back.” To the Duchess asking why she was not happy in her employ, Barbe replied, “Madam, I left my father’s house in order to serve the poor, and you are a great lady, very powerful and rich! If you were poor, Madam, I would serve you willingly.”<sup>161</sup>

She had to be recalled. Vincent and Louise rejoiced to see how much the love of the poor filled the hearts of their Daughters. “What do you think of it,” he wrote. “Are you not overjoyed to see the strength of the spirit of God in these two poor girls and the scorn which, thanks to Him, they experience for the world and its grandeur? You have no idea what courage this has given me for the Confraternity of Charity.”<sup>162</sup>

There was also Sister Jeanne Dalmagne whose heart was overflowing with charity. Sent to Nanteuil, she set about cleaning and dressing the wounds of a severely-stricken poor girl. Those wounds exuded an odor so offensive that no one else dared to approach her. Sister Jeanne would feel nauseated and sometimes would even lose consciousness, but as soon as she recovered, she would courageously resume her work of mercy.<sup>163</sup>

How can we refrain from citing also the admirable devotion unto death of a sister named Marie-Joseph? When she was in her agony, she was told of a poor person who had need of being bled. “She arose from her deathbed, bled the patient, fell herself after having done that, and died shortly afterwards.”<sup>164</sup>

Had Saint Vincent been wrong in calling those Daughters “martyrs of charity?” Louise de Marillac had known how to attract them, form and sustain their devotedness. Wasn’t that for Louise the characteristic of a “social vocation?” That vocation is all the more extraordinary because, after more than three centuries and on every continent, the Servants of the Poor continue their mission, be it in preventing misery as educators or in relieving misery as nurses and social workers.

## Chapter 2

### ***THE ABANDONMENT OF INFANTS***

*Love much the service of those little children  
by whose mouth God receives perfect praise . . .  
Consider yourselves their mothers.  
Saint Vincent de Paul*

There have always been, and undoubtedly there will always be foundlings. As long as society is governed by the same passions and disturbed by the same crimes that have persisted through the centuries, the abandoning of poor little ones will continue to be a deplorable reality. That was true yesterday, and is true today. Thus, the establishment of homes for foundlings by Saint Vincent de Paul and his faithful co-worker was needed in their century, but more than that, it marked a step forward in social progress.

#### *In Feudal Times*

During this period of history feudal lords considered foundlings “an onerous burden,” since they incurred the obligation of providing for the upkeep of such children within their territorial holdings.<sup>1</sup>

Little protected in the following centuries by patent letters, the condition of “bastards” remained precarious and extremely deplorable. Those little ones were excluded from the help given in hospitals to legitimate babies, orphans and the poor. The pretext for such discrimination was that their number would increase too rapidly. The patent letters of Charles VII under date of August 7, 1445, stated:

. . . there might be a very great number of them because many people would make too little difficulty in abandoning themselves to sin were they to see that bastard children were well nourished, and that they themselves would have neither the responsibility nor the care of them. Furthermore, twenty hospitals would not suffice to house them.<sup>2</sup>



The canons and the Chapter of Notre Dame had consequently to assume the charge of the foundlings of Paris, "whom they were accustomed to receive and feed for the honor of God."<sup>3</sup> That fact is recorded in the letters patent of 1536, that provided for the foundation of the Enfants-Rouges Hospital.

### *In The Sixteenth Century*

Infant mortality among the foundlings increased so much that the Parliament of Paris judged it necessary by the decree of August 11, 1552, to oblige the Lords, High Judges of the capital to contribute to the "feeding, upkeep, and sustenance" of the foundlings of the city and the environs. Besides the Archbishop of Paris and the Chapter of Notre-Dame, the following were included among the high judges of the city: the Abbots of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Victor, and Saint-Genevieve, the Grand Prior of France, the Priors of Saint Martin-des-champs and Saint-Denis-de-la-Charte, the Abbess of Montmartre, the Chapters of Saint-Marcel, Saint-Merry and Saint-Benoit.<sup>4</sup>

Reminded of their obligation, the Lords High Judges made plans for an establishment destined especially for foundlings. Houses of Port Saint-Landry "near the episcopal residence and at the end of a street leading down to the river"<sup>5</sup> were put at their disposal.

### *The Couche*

Parliament ordered an inspection of the establishment which the general public had begun to call "La Couche." The inspectors offered suggestions for needed repairs to the "Gentlemen of Notre-Dame" and approved their project in 1570. They also recommended that meetings be held from time to time so that the Lords High Judges of the city "might confer and draw up policies and regulations for the government and administration of the work."<sup>6</sup> Three women and a gentleman of the bourgeoisie were selected to take charge of watching over, feeding, and raising those children. A treasurer was appointed to handle the money.<sup>7</sup>

Political circumstances did not favor the implementation of the wise directives and the good will of the Parliament and of the Chapter. The

year 1572 witnessed the massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day. The siege of Paris, first by Henry III and then by Henry IV, prevented the development of this Christian work or at least its functioning according to the organizational plan established in the beginning.

### *In The Seventeenth Century*

Historians are unanimous in depicting the situation of the abandoned children as very deplorable in the seventeenth century. Their plight was an evil that called for redress, particularly in Paris where it was most prevalent.

The upkeep of abandoned children still depended too much on insufficient and precarious help obtained through public sympathy. Bouchel, who lived in the early part of the century, thus described the ingenious originality with which appeals were made to solicit public charity:

On the left side of the large church of Notre-Dame there is a wooden bed fastened to the stone floor. On feast days, foundlings are placed on it in order to excite the people to charity. Two or three nurses standing near the bed hold a basin to receive the alms of the wealthy who pass by. The so-called foundlings are sometimes requested and taken by good people without children who assume the responsibility of feeding and raising those children as if they were their own.<sup>8</sup>

Almost daily in the midst of a society known for its exquisitely polite mores, newborns were abandoned either on the sidewalks or on the thresholds of churches. Those little ones were sometimes already dead or dying of hunger under the eyes of passers-by. Others were picked up by the policeman of the district who carried them to "La Couche." Police records show that three or four hundred of these little ones were thus abandoned every year. In 1649, Monsieur Vincent deplored the fact that "not a single one had been found alive in the last fifty years."<sup>9</sup>

Abandoned children were still being brought to the Couche but because of a lack of resources, the widow who had succeeded the first women destined for the work found herself in the impossible situation of continuing efficaciously the care and feeding of the said children. Furthermore, the two servants who helped her in this work took very bad care of the children. Without the slightest scruple, they handed them over to anyone who needed a baby for any purpose whatever. Such conduct



provoked some very sinister rumors among the people about the fate which awaited these unfortunate babies placed in that shelter.<sup>10</sup> Saint Vincent de Paul has left one of the best descriptions of their plight:

These poor little creatures were badly cared for: one wet nurse had to suffice for four or five of them . . . They were being sold . . . to scoundrels who broke their arms and legs in order to arouse the compassion of passers-by and incline them to give alms and they were then allowed to die of hunger. . . They were given laudanum pills to put them to sleep.<sup>11</sup>

What distressed him even more was the deplorable fact that they died without hope of being saved since the widow entrusted with their care admitted never having any of them baptized.<sup>12</sup>

### *Saint Louise Alarmed at the Fate of the Foundlings*

Louise de Marillac, Superioress of the Daughters of Charity, who had assisted the Ladies at the Hôtel Dieu since 1634, was overcome with emotion when she heard of what was going on in that house of "La Couche." Her first biographer states that it was she who notified Monsieur Vincent about the conditions there.<sup>13</sup> His answer was not long coming.

I intend, he wrote, to speak at length to the Procurator General about finding means to succor these poor creatures in the foundling establishment. Madame Goussault has perhaps told you about the suggestion that was made to me in that regard. We shall talk it over with you in three or four days.<sup>14</sup>

### *Collaboration of the Ladies of Charity*

Louise and Vincent agreed that "to succor these poor creatures" would be impossible without the collaboration of the Ladies of Charity of whom Louise was one of the most important.<sup>15</sup> They had already improved the condition of the children at the Hôtel Dieu. In 1634, for want of wet nurses, the Ladies had been obliged to resort to artificial feeding, and had some goats brought for that purpose to the Hôtel Dieu, because "they were easily milked for those little ones."<sup>16</sup> Later on, when funds were more plentiful, they rejoiced in being able to do more by engaging three wet nurses for the hospital and paying their wages.

Why should they not do as much for the poor abandoned children of the "Couche?" To propose such a thing in the seventeenth century to the ladies of the nobility and of the bourgeoisie was a very delicate matter. Vincent and Louise well understood the prejudice which branded illegitimate children as reprobates of their society.<sup>17</sup> They would have to combat that unchristian attitude of the ladies and their lack of understanding of illegitimate children when they categorized them as fruits of sin in spite of the babies' personal innocence.

Monsieur Vincent spoke to a small group of the ladies inviting them to visit the "Couche" in order to discover for themselves the abuses that prevailed. He was convinced that once they saw the poor little ones they would be moved to assist them. Vincent was right as Monsignor Calvet testifies:

Those women of the aristocracy were big-hearted; but they were entirely out of touch with all this misery and had not even suspected the depths of its horror; it had to be shown to them in concrete, human terms . . . When they understood and were really moved, they were capable of real generosity.<sup>18</sup>

Such was the case with the foundlings for whom, by dint of persistency, the holy priest awakened a charitable love in the hearts of the Parisian bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Having won the confidence of a few, Vincent then assembled all the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel Dieu. He had to struggle against the manifest repugnance of the greater number among them. He rose above all prejudice. He pleaded the cause of those little creatures of God with an enthusiasm that became contagious. The Assembly formulated a resolution to the effect that a tentative trial of the work with the foundlings would be made.<sup>19</sup>

### *A Small Beginning*

The Ladies were of the opinion that no one was better prepared to organize the service of the foundlings than Mademoiselle Le Gras and her Daughters of Charity. Because of the shortage of wet nurses, they wondered whether it would not be better in the beginning to take only two or three infants so that they "might feed them with cow's milk." Vincent confided to his helper the consolation it was for him "that Divine Providence addressed Himself to you for that work."<sup>20</sup>

On her part, Louise was only awaiting that approbation to receive into



her home the very first of those thousands of children who, throughout the centuries and in every country, would experience “the affection which good mothers have for their children”<sup>21</sup> under the white wings of a Servant of the Poor. If, at times, Louise experienced moments of discouragement and repugnance at the thought of serving “crying and dirty brats, born of wicked mothers who gave birth to them while offending God and then abandoned them,” she would regain courage on rereading the words of Saint Vincent: “You repair the offense of those wicked mothers who thus abandoned their children, when you serve them for the love of God and because they belong to Him.”<sup>22</sup>

The saint who understood only too well the repugnance which such a work can make one feel, quickly added that “only the love of God can induce anyone to undertake it.” Consequently, he urged the Daughters to proceed and even outlined for them the manner in which they should render that service.

“Give yourselves to God, my Daughters, in order to serve them with great charity and sweetness. Make it a habit of seeing God in them and of serving them in God and for His Love.”<sup>23</sup>

### *Louise Better than Anyone Could Understand Their Misfortune*

Divine Providence who had entrusted to Louise the care of so many adopted children had prepared her for this mission. Born in 1591, in the Marillac family whose name resounded familiarly in the court of Louis XIII, she had been weak and sickly from the cradle.

### *Weak*

She was an unfortunate child who had experienced the effect of the maledictions of the Lord weeping over Jerusalem: “It will be hard on pregnant or nursing mothers in those days.” (Mt 24,19) France had just undergone the miseries of civil wars waged over the succession to the throne of France. As a result, Louise was condemned to bear throughout life a very fragile and weak body which would cause Saint Vincent to exclaim in 1647, that he “considered her as naturally dead for ten years and that her only life was that which came from grace.”<sup>24</sup> Her physical

debility only increased her moral energy. In the midst of continual alternatives of weakness and infirmity which tormented her to the extent of bringing her to death's door, she seemed to rise from her bed of agony morally greater and more disposed than ever to her life of suffering and work.

### *Orphaned Early in Life*

Besides her physical weakness, Louise tasted the sad bitterness of never having known her mother. These combined to produce in her a spirit of melancholy against which she had to struggle constantly, and a ceaseless yearning for tenderness which was seldom satisfied. Her personality was tinged with a quasi-sadness so characteristic of orphans and with which she "might have degenerated into bitterness if religion had not taken a hold on her heart and made her find in her own sufferings a source of compassion for the sufferings of others."<sup>25</sup>

On January 12, 1595, when Louise was hardly four years old, her father had married Antoinette Camus.<sup>26</sup> That did not give the little one the experience of carefree abandon in motherly arms, for her step-mother seems to have reserved all her affection and solicitude for the children of her first marriage. Peace and tranquility were not the keynote of the new de Marillac home because between the years 1595 and 1602, the family changed lodgings seven times.<sup>27</sup> It is not known where Louise spent the first years of her life, especially after her father had married again. It is very probable that he wanted to withdraw her from a home where she was unwanted. When she was a little older, Louise was sent to boarding school at the royal monastery of Saint Louis in Poissy, where she had a cousin, Louise de Marillac, who was a member of the Dominican community and a woman of great virtue and of unusual literary ability.<sup>28</sup>

Without giving either date or reason, the saint's first biographer simply states that her father withdrew her from the monastery, a very extravagant and ostentatious dwelling for his more modest means, and placed her in Paris under the guardianship of a "clever and virtuous lady from whom she was to learn all that a young girl of her condition should know."<sup>29</sup>

The haziness that covers this period of her life makes it impossible to know where she was on July 25, 1604, when as a serious child of thirteen she heard the news of her father's death. What is known is that in his will, Monsieur de Marillac stated that Louise had been his greatest consolation



in life and that she had been given to him by God for his “tranquility of spirit in the midst of the afflictions of life.”<sup>30</sup>

One thing is certain. In 1604, Louise experienced a second time the sufferings of being orphaned. In later life when she spoke of her childhood she would say, “God made me know early in life that I must go to Him by the Cross. From the time of my birth and at every age, He scarcely ever left me without occasions of suffering.”<sup>31</sup>

Such melancholic impressions of her youth certainly helped her to understand better in 1638, all the love which must be bestowed on those babies abandoned by their mothers and being entrusted to her and to her Daughters.

### *A Mother Herself*

The Providential preparation begun in Louise’s childhood and youth continued in her life as a Christian wife. Married on February 5, 1613, she experienced the joy of motherhood when she gave birth to a son, Michel Antoine, on October 18, 1613. She tried to raise and educate her son for God’s service but God led him along another path which his mother, who loved him too tenderly perhaps, found strewn with more thorns than roses. Her director made repeated references to her maternal tenderness:

You have more tenderness, he wrote to her, than any mother I have ever known—I have never seen a mother so much as you are. You are not nearly so much a woman in other things. In the name of God, leave your son in the care of His heavenly Father who loves him more than you. At least, lessen your anxiety.<sup>32</sup>

Louise understood the lesson. The love which nature had enkindled in her motherly heart in the midst of the fears, sorrows, anxieties, and consolations she experienced for her son Michel would last as long as she lived but that love would rise above the natural level and be poured out on all the poor of Jesus Christ in order to help them both in soul and body.

### *Spiritual Motherhood*

In 1633, Louise was to experience another type of motherhood of an entirely spiritual nature. In her home in the Parish of Saint Nicolas-du-

Chardonnet, where some village girls had assembled, she suffered the pangs of birth that accompany the giving of life, be it natural or supernatural, as she brought forth the new society destined for the service of the poor. "What must she not have suffered of the love of sacrifice and of a non-earthly maternal affection which had its flame centered in the heart of Christ, in the bosom of God who is Charity itself."<sup>33</sup>

After having asked Mademoiselle Le Gras to infuse in these good village girls the life and spirit of "Servants of the poor" and to teach them to substitute the Charity of Christ for the generosity of the century, Saint Vincent had, five years later, confided the foundlings to her motherly heart.

Thanks to her cooperation, a new work, whose benefits have not been exhausted after three centuries, was about to be introduced in the city of Paris, where all the miseries of the century would, one after the other, seek their counterweight in the charity of Vincent and Louise. Properly speaking they made no innovation with the foundlings. They picked up a work in its embryonic state and, thanks to their sense of organization, made of it a national work for the welfare of children.

### *Method of Helping the Foundlings*

Realist that she was, Louise foresaw from the very beginning the great difficulties, the agonizing confusion and especially the great expense of the enterprise. In spite of that, she agreed to make a tentative trial at it and began it at her home on a very small scale, accepting only two or three children, for whom one wet nurse "could suffice for the time being and longer."<sup>34</sup> However Vincent had a wider field of vision and urged her to "experiment with a greater number of foundlings." The Ladies also were busy but each one according to her own fancy. Louise was not slow in seeing that this haphazard situation had to be corrected and she established a well-ordered plan to present to the Ladies. The latter agreed to the principles included but remained divided as to methodology.

The cause of much of the disorder came from one of the Ladies, a Miss Hardy, who wished that the Ladies might take charge of the "Couche" without changing its location or the procedures established there. A very strong-willed individual, Miss Hardy urged Saint Vincent to assemble the Ladies who upheld her viewpoint and had promised to help her. Vincent did not agree with her and thought it wise to seek the advice of his co-worker.



It seems to me that it would be better to abandon the resources of this house rather than to be subjected to so many accounts to render and so many difficulties to overcome. Let us establish an entirely new work and leave this one as it is, at least for the present. What do you think?<sup>35</sup>

The establishment of a new work, less restricted and more Christian, although more costly, also seemed preferable to Louise. The good priest found himself in the sad necessity of either displeasing Miss Hardy or of acting against his own judgment in his attempt to satisfy her. After much thought he felt it would be better to follow his plan, hoping that the offended lady might at least be reconciled by Louise's compromise offer of having a "wet nurse and some goats."<sup>36</sup>

The Ladies, who had seen for themselves the real misery of the poor little innocent ones of the "Couche," were eager to uphold Louise's proposal and suggested that the number of children accepted be increased according to the resources on hand. Twelve were then chosen, drawn by lots "in order to honor Divine Providence, not knowing what His designs were for those poor children."<sup>37</sup>

### *The First Infant Home on Rue des Boulangers*

The Ladies rented a small house on Rue des Boulangers near the Saint Victor Gate. Thus, in February 1638, the Daughters of Charity became the mothers by adoption of the abandoned children of the capital.

The Ladies of Charity had stipulated that of necessity "that house should be under the charge of the Superioress of the Daughters of Charity and that she should spend seven or eight days there" so as to set the work in operation.<sup>38</sup> Vincent, seconding the suggestion, wrote Louise at the time of the transfer: "Here is work laid out for you, on account of the transfer of the foundlings and the need for organizing their new establishment."<sup>39</sup> Henceforth, Louise supervised the work and directed the details of this service with the most ingenious and constant solicitude.

### *The Ladies Maintain the Administration*

For the organization of the new establishment, her first care was to draw up a memorandum which she communicated to Saint Vincent. This he examined at "two assemblies in the presence of the Lady Officers of

the Hôtel Dieu" and later used it as a basic text to set up a kind of rule. The Ladies only retained the right to defray the expenses necessary for the upkeep of the establishment and to provide for the temporal administration. "The direction of the Daughters, the nurses and the children who survived" devolved upon Louise.<sup>40</sup>

It was absolutely necessary to define the role of Mademoiselle Le Gras in the government of the work at its very inception because, from the very beginning she was to encounter difficulties with the governess of the house, Sister Pelletier, a woman of great independence, who would have done far better never to have entered the Community, where she stayed but a short time.<sup>41</sup>

That sister had been placed at the Hôtel Dieu in 1636, when Saint Vincent felt "that a person of rank or of high esteem was needed, as much for the contacts to be made on behalf of the children as for showing tact in dealing with the Ladies."<sup>42</sup> She had therefore already had experience with the foundlings brought to the Hôtel Dieu before being sent to the "Couche." Was it on account of this experience that she was named governess of the House on the rue des Boulangers or was it on account of the generous help given to the work by one of her relatives?<sup>43</sup> Documents of those times offer no solution to this.

Whatever the case might have been, once Sister Pelletier had been installed in the new lodging she wished to subject herself neither to the rule nor to Community life.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, having to render an account to Mademoiselle Le Gras "every week or at least every two weeks"<sup>45</sup> of what was happening in the house did not please her in the least. On the contrary, she went to great length in appealing to ecclesiastical and civil authority, against either Saint Vincent or the Ladies of Charity, in order to have the administration and resources of the work entrusted to her alone. When Louise informed Saint Vincent of those undertakings, she expressed her confidence that "God would know how to derive glory from the unfortunate circumstances."<sup>46</sup>

### *The Sisters*

A day came at last when Vincent had the joy of sending the documents relative to the establishment to the Superioress, as well as the keys of the house. All was settled very cordially, if we are to judge from the fact that Louise entrusted the charge of the Mother House to Sister Pelletier in the



month of September 1638, for the duration of her absence from Paris.<sup>47</sup> Louise spent the first few days with her sisters in the little house on rue des Boulangers in order to get the work under way, to see that everything was in good order and to regulate expenses. It was doubtless during this sojourn that she drew up the budget of expenses, which was a masterpiece of efficiency, containing minute details of the new work. Rent for the house amounted to 300 *livres*, and the upkeep of the four nurses was provided for at eight *écus* each, with an additional three *sols* for bread, while the governess and the three Daughters of Charity were allotted only two *sols* apiece for their bread.<sup>48</sup> The care given to all details in the budget reflected Louise's foresight and her spirit of good order, which manifested itself so many times in the following years.

### *The House is Requisitioned*

As soon as Louise had left, difficulties of a different kind presented themselves. The military authorities were demanding some of the rooms in the house to lodge soldiers. When Louise heard of that, her maternal solicitude for the safeguard of the purity of the sisters and the children, as well as her desire to avoid the least scandal, prompted her to write to Saint Vincent begging him to appeal to Madame, the Chancellor's wife, "until your charity is able to obtain protection from the queen."<sup>49</sup> The Chancellor's wife was unable to do anything in the matter, so the saint addressed himself to the Duchess d'Aiguillon. While awaiting a favorable answer, he felt it essential that his helper return "to spend a few days in the house of the foundlings."<sup>50</sup>

That was a consolation for Louise to find herself once again among those innocent little ones to whom she had become greatly attached. What saddened her was not to be able to adopt a greater number of them. In spite of the sympathy which the work aroused, it was progressing very slowly. The responsibility of the undertaking seemed at times to go beyond the strength of the Ladies. There were but twelve or fourteen hundred *livres* of revenue assured each year and the children were still but twelve in number. The Ladies were very faithful replacing "the empty places"<sup>51</sup> as soon as there was a vacancy, but the mortality of the children was still very great. Louise was greatly distressed and Vincent shared her worries. "There may be something to what you tell me," he wrote to her. "We shall have to take advice once and for all as to what should be done in the matter."<sup>52</sup>

The saint greatly desired her to be present at a proposed assembly of the Ladies.<sup>53</sup> In spite of the difficulties of the work they both understood that the time had come when even more had to be done. The General Assembly of the Ladies at the beginning of the year 1640, would finally fulfill the hopes of the two saints.

### *1640: The Work Expands as All Foundlings Will Be Admitted*

Vincent was eager to inform Louise of the good news. As she was absent from Paris at the moment, he wrote:

Oh, how necessary is your presence here. . .the General Assembly of the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu was held last Thursday. Her Highness the Princess and the Duchess d'Aiguillon honored it with their presence. Never have I seen the company so numerous nor their witness to modesty so striking. At the assembly the Ladies resolved to take over all the foundlings. . . You may be sure, Mademoiselle, that you were thought of at the meeting.<sup>54</sup>

It was necessary, however, to wait until March 30, 1640, before such an enormous undertaking could be implemented.<sup>55</sup> The little house of rue des Boulangers was far too small to shelter all the poor little ones whose number increased constantly. Louise took some of the babies to her own home and others to the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity at La Chapelle, near Paris. She had brought back the babies whom the governess of the Couche had placed in the city, and from the very beginning, she organized the placing of the infants with nurses.

### *Foster Homes*

Louise always endeavored to place the children in the country when finances permitted it. It is true that she kept some wet nurses at the Sisters' House but only as a temporary measure in order to assure the immediate feeding of the abandoned infants.<sup>56</sup> Since the wet nurses were few in number, it was at times necessary to resort to artificial feeding. Louise preferred that measure to confiding them to women who were not absolutely reliable.



*In Paris at First*

Even in the provinces the number of nurses did not suffice. That rendered the placing of foundlings very difficult. As early as 1638, Louise had been obliged to accept the wet nurse offered her from the Hôtel-Dieu<sup>57</sup> because she had been unable to find any. Several times later she had to have recourse to other nurses in the capital itself, because the lack of nurses was felt greater and greater as the number of foundlings increased. Her preference, however, was for nurses in the country!

*Then in the Provinces*

On March 30, 1640, Louise was able to place the first four of her large family of foundlings with nurses living in the country. The journeys to the nurses' homes were made over very bad roads. Sometimes the trip had to be undertaken in poor boats or in bad carriages. There were times when the cold of winter or the hard work of harvest time prevented one getting to the women in the country who were frequently underpaid.<sup>58</sup> But Louise was not going to let herself be stopped by those obstacles to providing nurses in the provinces.

How much circumspection she showed in choosing them. She felt that too many precautions could not be taken concerning both the quality of their milk and the quality of their morals. Her preventing charity moved her to think of the future of her adopted children, of a future that would depend in part on the care which they received from their nurses. Their bodies, their minds and their good habits would be influenced by their environment even at that earliest stage of development.

She reasoned that it did not suffice to snatch the children from death or even to watch over their physical development. It was necessary to provide them with a good intellectual and moral education to produce citizens useful to themselves and to society. She insisted consequently, upon the obligation of watching over the moral habits of the children. For that reason, she personally interviewed the nurses who presented themselves.

### *Recruitment of Nurses*

Those women had to present an attestation of morality and undergo an examination by a physician to verify their age, the quality of their milk and their general condition of health. Louise required a certificate to be signed by the pastor of the parish or the village attesting not only to the regularity of the morals of the nurse, but also whether or not she was married and whether the child who had been entrusted to her was dead or alive. For that purpose, the nurse was given a printed sheet commonly called a "bull,"<sup>59</sup> a duplicate of which the sisters kept in the establishment. During the first week after the arrival of the child in the country, the nurse was to present this bull to her pastor for him to put his visa on it. The usefulness of the information given on those forms can be appreciated from the article of the rules of 1774 which states that those forms "will provide good references for the Pastors who can have them presented to them either to obtain information about the children or to find out whether they are living or dead."<sup>60</sup>

Among the documents consulted for the present work, the oldest of the bulls stated:

On this day, March 30, 1640, we have entrusted for nursing Joseph Decheunin to Marguerite, wife of Pierre Hallard, residing at la Follye, also called Goumet. We agree to pay her 100 *sols* a month, to be paid in advance for the first month. Her salary will be paid the following months by Mr. X, when she presents this form with a certificate signed by the Reverend Pastor of the place, which will assure us of the child's condition. Should the child die, he shall be buried without ceremony. In that case, the nurse shall be obliged to bring a certificate giving the date of his death and return the clothes belonging to the said child.<sup>61</sup>

The above certificate may seem a rather primitive document when compared to the highly organized files of twentieth-century social workers yet it contains details which are not without interest. We cite this particular document not only because it is the most ancient one extant but also because it concerns a foundling confided to the wife of Pierre Hallard by Louise de Marillac herself. The community of the Daughters of Charity possesses as one of the treasures of its Archives a manuscript which summarizes the facts stated in the above-cited document. Louise had written in her own hand the details of the placing of little Joseph at the home of "Marguerite Plassière, wife of Pierre Hallard, living at la Folie



near Gif," as well as details relative to nineteen other children placed in foster homes during the first month.<sup>62</sup> Marginal notes in Vincent de Paul's handwriting indicate both the order of the placement and the name of the place. The memorandum is then a living reminder of the two saints' collaboration in this great work of charity.

Of those nineteen children only four were confided to the nurses of the rue des Boulangers: "Charles, who is said to be of noble birth," a boy named "Stephen" and two little girls. Most of the adoptive mothers were peasants either living in Paris or in the environs of the city, "a laundress named Catherine. . .the wife of a porter near the Saint-Landry port. . .the wife of the butcher Denis. . .the wife of Marin Baron, sculptor. . .Michelle Damiette, an acquaintance of Madame Souscarrière."<sup>63</sup>

The conscientious and professional manner in which the nurses were chosen makes one think of the regulation governing the early maternity hospitals established at the turn of the century or the guidelines for control in a social welfare agency.

### *The Visiting of the Babies*

Placing the infants in foster homes became a more and more extensive undertaking. Louise was greatly concerned about following up the little ones who were at some distance from Paris and checking on the manner in which their nurses were discharging their obligations. The certificate of good conduct demanded of them at the time they received their wages gave some assurance about their moral conduct, but that did not suffice. Louise felt it necessary to undertake the visiting of the babies.

### *Lady Visitors*

Daily visits of the children at the Hôtel Dieu in Paris were already well organized. Similar visits to children placed in homes in Paris were established with the Ladies setting out "two by two on their appointed day, according to the note addressed to them."<sup>64</sup> Vincent and Louise desired to extend a similar system of visits for the children in the country. The Ladies were therefore encouraged to visit them when an opportunity presented itself. It was even suggested that "a young man of piety" might

be sent. This might have been one of the Brothers of Saint-Lazare, as was the case in 1649. Abelly relates that the Brother sent on that occasion on a tour of inspection, "spent nearly six weeks doing so."<sup>65</sup>

### *Sister Visitors*

Louise realized that those occasional visits were but a temporary measure. Once again it was to be to the Daughters of Charity that an appeal was made to ensure a constant, lasting service. At first, a sister set out merely as a helper of the Ladies. It was in September 1642, that the first of the Daughters for this work was to be chosen. A companion was needed for Madame du Mée, who was "setting out to visit the children in the Normandy region." "Whom are we going to send with her?" asked Vincent.<sup>66</sup> Louise's choice of Sister Jeanne of the parish of Saint-Germain pleased him very much.<sup>67</sup>

### *Formation of the Sisters for Their Mission in the Country*

Foreseeing the time when her Daughters would set out alone to visit the foundlings, Louise undertook the formation of the first "visiting nurses" whose work would extend the radius of charitable activity. A record of the children placed in foster homes was given to them. This contained the family name and the first name of the child, age and sex. A blank space allowed the sisters to write down their observations with regard to the physical constitution of the child and of his or her nurse, the moral habits of the little one and the care given.

Lallemand has published such a report. It concerns a visit made in Picardy and in Normandy by the sisters of the Foundling Hospital. It was written by Sister Nicole Haran, who was of the number of the Daughters formed in virtue and in the work of the Institute by the foundress herself. In 1659, Louise was to praise her "great charity for the little ones."<sup>68</sup> The report states that "the sisters found all the children in the country fairly well taken care of with the exception of ten, who were taken away from the nurses who had been neglecting them and were entrusted to others who would take better care of them." They reported "that in the Normandy area, where nearly 400 were given in keeping, they were much better fed than the 232 children in Picardy."<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile in Paris, Sister Cailly, treasurer of the Enfants-Rouges



Establishment, had been repeatedly requesting that the children from the "Couche" and the nurses contaminated by the unfortunate little ones be transferred to the Vaugirard Hospital because there was no adequate treatment room in the house. Quite unusual for the seventeenth century, she took the precaution of having all their belongings taken along with them.

Louise carefully kept in touch by correspondence with her Daughters on their visiting tours. "Blessed be God," she encouraged two of them, "for the strength and courage He is giving you in all your labors. You are doing marvels. As soon as I hear the Ladies' decision, I will inform that good and charitable clerk. Do not fail to send us back all the children who can walk alone, and have all those who are over eighteen months old weaned."<sup>70</sup>

The following month these two sisters, Barbara and Marie Daras, returned home in good health "from the visit of all the foundling children placed in foster homes, where they have been for six weeks."<sup>71</sup>

Sister Barbara showed herself particularly apt in making these inspection tours. Two years later<sup>72</sup> and several times afterwards she was sent to visit the foundlings, a work for which she showed no repugnance.<sup>73</sup> Her devotion to those little ones was truly a cult, a cult of Him who became a little child for us. At the conference held on the subject of her virtues, one of our first sisters related the following: "She had a great fondness for children and used to say that in them she beheld the Child Jesus. She never complained of any trouble with them. She carried that love so far that at night she would hold them in her arms for lack of a cradle."<sup>74</sup>

### *Those at Home*

At times sisters living in the villages, where children had been placed in foster homes, had to exercise great vigilance over the little ones and over their adoptive mothers. Once when she was absent from Paris, Louise wrote to a sister at the Mother House for a list of "the names and places where all the children in this region may be found so that I might inquire concerning them."<sup>75</sup> In 1652, she wrote to the sisters at Chars, "Sister Margaret will keep an account of what you give to the foster parents. Send us I beg you, a report of the state of that child and make sure that he is brought back to us at the time that is stated."<sup>76</sup> In his turn Vincent encouraged Sister Jeanne Françoise at Etampes, telling her that

she had done well to send the older children to the village. He also admitted to her that the Ladies "are becoming tired or bored at having to meet such expenses. Nevertheless, I shall see them tomorrow in order to have them try to send something so that you may be able to continue to feed and raise the little ones for sometime yet."<sup>77</sup>

### *Difficulties—Lack of Money*

The cooling of charity and the depletion of resources of the work rendered the direction of the personnel at the Foundling Hospital a very difficult problem for Mademoiselle Le Gras. The plight was aggravated by civil war. The sisters were obliged to reduce the number of nurses in the house to two. There was no money to be able to place the children with nurses in the country. . . "Seven little ones cannot tolerate bottle feeding. . . and there is no way of providing sheets and clothing."<sup>78</sup>

A little later, the situation became worse and Louise was forced to write, "The nurses of the villages are beginning to threaten us and to bring back the children. Debts are increasing so much that there is no hope of paying them."<sup>79</sup>

Vincent knew that only too well. Sister Genevieve Poisson was hounding him for money to pay the salaries of the nurses at the House. He could only suggest, "be patient for some time and do the least harm possible."<sup>80</sup> Louise continued to worry about the nurses in the villages.

We should like to know, she wrote, if the poor nurses will have some money for the feast days, and if the children whom they are bringing back for lack of payment can be placed with nurses by using some of the money given in order to place new foundlings.<sup>81</sup>

Although Vincent was moved by the cries of distress of his collaborator, he was not resigned to abandon the work. He reminded Louise that "the work of the foundlings is in the hands of Our Lord."<sup>82</sup>

It was cruel anguish for Louise but she dared not appeal again to the wealthy. She declared that she was tired of letting the great ones at the Court and in the city hear her sighs and her moaning. She even refused to address herself to Madame Séguier, saying that it seemed to her that she had already too frequently made known the sorry plight of both children and nurses. She feared that she was becoming importunate and that she was saddening hearts that were tender and charitable.<sup>83</sup>



She had even addressed herself to the Chancellor himself so that he might know “that a hundred of those poor little ones who are exposed to so many needs are without bread.”<sup>84</sup>

### *An Appeal is Made to the Ladies*

Finally, she felt obliged to write to Mademoiselle de Lamoignon to express the urgent necessity of an assembly of the Ladies and the need of supplementary collections to support the work.

Similar cries of distress concerning the lot of the poor nurses filled her letters at the beginning of 1650.

There is no longer a way, she wrote, of resisting in conscience the pity which the poor nurses in the country provoke by asking what is their just due, not only for their trouble but likewise for having made use of their own supplies. After their charity they find themselves dying of hunger and forced to come from great distances three or four times without being successful in collecting their money.<sup>85</sup>

There seemed to be no other alternative than to propose to the Ladies, “not to take any more foundlings in order to be able to take care of those on hand, and to withdraw from the country all those who are weaned.”<sup>86</sup> With the help of the Procurator General, the children were given temporary lodging at the *Enfermés*. Louise sent two sisters to take charge of the children there. “We are greatly responsible for supplying food for the nurses,” she explained. “However, if things continue as they are, it will certainly be necessary to end the work.”<sup>87</sup>

### *Loans*

According to her first biographer, there was no effort that Louise did not exert in order to make ends meet. She borrowed money . . . She and her Daughters, “even deprived themselves of the necessities of life and limited themselves each day to one meal of the coarsest type of food.”<sup>88</sup> A few months previously she had written to Vincent telling him that it had been necessary to use all the money they had to pay the expenses of the house amounting to fifteen or twenty pounds. . . . “and we do not foresee

receiving anything at all for another month."<sup>89</sup> Without consulting the rules of human prudence or simply human laws in all of this, Louise followed but the promptings of her zeal and relied on her unalterable confidence in Divine Providence.

### *Lack of Nurses*

To add to her already heavy burden of worries, another greater cause of anxiety arose. She was forced to engage nurses about whom she had some fear. She said of them, "Although we try to choose good-living women, it seems that most of these persons are not forced into retirement by hard times but rather because of bad behavior and that many of these women, brought together from the four winds, indulge in bad language and licentious conduct."<sup>90</sup>

### *Saint Louise and Saint Vincent Encourage the Dedication of the Sisters*

To counterbalance the harmful influence of those nurses, Louise spent herself unreservedly in providing an excellent formation for the Daughters of Charity whom she appointed to be adoptive mothers. From the Foundling Home, she wrote to the sisters in Paris: "Oh how I wish that all the sisters were here and had the same feelings which God gives me toward this great work."<sup>91</sup>

Louise did not confide the service of children to just any sister at all. Monsieur Vincent upheld her whole-heartedly when she insisted on the importance of the delicate work of choosing the right ones. He suffered keenly on being told that some malicious person had remarked that, "When a Daughter of Charity was not fit for parish work, she was sent to the Foundlings."<sup>92</sup>

He set this point aright in the following terms, "Now remember this, my Daughters, that Mademoiselle Le Gras never had such a thought. On the contrary, she is careful to send to the Foundlings such persons as those who would take the place of their father and mother. Please tell me, have we any better girls than those, who for the love of God, are willing to render Him service in the person of these children. I can see no better sisters than those who are at the Foundling Home."<sup>93</sup>



Vincent often poured out his heart quite freely with regard to this work which was so dear to him. He went into great detail in his talks with the sisters entrusted with the care of the little ones. As early as 1643, he devoted an entire conference to that service. He exalted first of all the sisters' mission of charity towards those little ones who are the children of God, who "is both father and mother to them and sees to their needs." It is He who takes pleasure, "in listening to their babbling."<sup>94</sup> He told them what a great honor God bestowed upon them in choosing them in preference to so many others, "you, poor village girls without experience, without knowledge, called to the exclusion of many in order to render Him this service." Then he continued, "from all eternity, He has chosen you, my Daughters, for their service. What an honor for you! If fashionable people consider themselves honored to serve the children of the great, how much more should you feel honored who have been called to serve the children of God!"<sup>95</sup>

He pointed out that the nobility of their employment entailed duties to be fulfilled. The saint then stressed the need of taking "great care of those poor little ones and of supplying all their wants." He warned them "not to show more affection for some rather than for others, because preferences cause envy and jealousy, to which the little ones might become accustomed." Finally, he advised them "to consider yourselves their mothers and as such to take pleasure in serving them and to do all that you can for their welfare."<sup>96</sup>

In order to sustain their courage in this work, which could easily be troublesome and repugnant, he showed them the great recompense it promised:

If God had not called you to His service, if He had left you amidst the troubles of the world, you would have been mothers, and your children would have given you far more worry and trouble than these do. And for what? Like most mothers you would have loved them with a natural love. . . . What reward would you have had for that? Quite simply, a natural reward: your own satisfaction. . . . But for having served those little children abandoned by all, what will you receive? God throughout eternity.<sup>97</sup>

In a conference of 1654, the saint spoke to the sisters of the virtue they must practice to prevent giving scandal to those poor little ones. Referring to their role as adoptive mothers, he said to them, "If she is good, they will be good. If she is bad, they will be bad. If you become angry, they will become angry. If you murmur, they will murmur; and if they should

be damned, they will hold it against you. Do not doubt it, for you will have been responsible for this."<sup>98</sup>

In other conferences, he referred again to the thought that the sisters became, "virgins and mothers at the same time" when they accepted to discharge the duties of a mother toward the foundlings.

### *Louise Follows Solicitously the Activity of Her Daughters*

The writings of Louise de Marillac, in particular her letters to the Daughters of Charity, testify to her affectionate solicitude in their regard. How much exactitude and zeal did she not require of them. She insisted that the future of the children would be greatly influenced by the manner in which the sisters performed their service to them. She wished that her Daughters might possess, even more than those precious qualities already singled out, those of foresight and vigilant affection so that no care, no fatigue might stop them. In other words, she hoped that they would love with a maternal love. To help them achieve that aim she reminded them from time to time of how agreeable their service was to God and how dangerous it could be if performed negligently. She then suggested to Vincent that he prepare two or three meditations specifically on the subject of the service of the foundlings.<sup>99</sup>

In 1648, she wrote to him on the same subject, "The work of our poor sisters here is almost unbelievable, not only because it is heavy but also because of the natural repugnance which one feels for this type of work. That is why it is so necessary to help them, to encourage them and to make known to them what their work is before God. It is good also to help them with our prayers."<sup>100</sup>

Her frequent visits to the Foundling Home afforded her many occasions to encourage and to counsel the sisters. Nor did she forget them when she was away from Paris. From Nantes, she wrote to Sister Jeanne Lepeintre, "to have great care of our sisters at the Foundling Home and to see that they receive the help they greatly need."<sup>101</sup>

When she heard of the mortal anxiety in which some of the sisters were living, threatened by bands of undisciplined soldiers, she recommended to them that they keep together and be very careful to keep the older girls within sight in the school "even though you may get no help from them."<sup>102</sup>



*The Foundlings at Bicêtre*

Louise's personal influence over the sisters was greatly felt during the stay of the children at the chateau of Bicêtre, upon which she looked askance.

As early as 1643, the Ladies of Charity had striven to take possession of that chateau. Louise related the fine reception they had received from the Chancellor and the advice which he had given them to refer the matter "to the Queen and to have letters patent drawn up."<sup>103</sup> It was, however, not until July 7, 1647, that Louise received the order: "Tomorrow, Sunday, at one o'clock send four children, two boys and two girls, with two Daughters of Charity to the chateau of Bicêtre. Take the children's clothing but no bed linen. Take also whatever may be necessary to sustain them on that day and the next."<sup>104</sup>

The Ladies planned to study the details of organization on the spot. Although Louise was resigned to having the children transferred to Bicêtre, she did not favor it. Furthermore, the plans that the Ladies were making were not of such a nature as to dissipate her fears. Already, she had set forth the difficulties which this transfer would entail: the inconvenience of a house that had been inhabited by people of bad reputation, the dangers of the neighborhood, the distance from Paris, the great expense necessary to put the place in a condition suitable for living quarters, and the difficulties involved in trying to visit the children.<sup>105</sup>

A few days after the installation she renewed her objections even more strongly: "Experience will prove that it was not without reason that I feared the lodging of Bicêtre. They are choosing for the sleeping quarters tiny rooms in which the air becomes fetid almost immediately, leaving the larger rooms empty, but our poor sisters do not dare say anything. They do not wish that Mass be celebrated there but that our sisters should go to Gentilly. And what will happen to the children in the meantime, and who will do the work?"<sup>106</sup>

A small detail perhaps, this worry about "tiny rooms in which the air becomes fetid almost immediately," but defective hygienic measures mattered greatly to Louise who was always concerned about the cleanliness, the convenience and the good living conditions of an establishment. She felt that cleanliness was essential everywhere, but especially so in a children's hospital. This may seem a small detail for our century so accustomed to excellent hygienic conditions for the newborn, but Louise de Marillac belonged to the seventeenth century. For that very reason,



one must ever admire her precise directives regarding cleanliness and her insistence on making others aware of it. Even the departure of a foundling occasioned from her the recommendation "that he be clothed in a very clean manner from his undershirt to his bonnet."<sup>107</sup>

### *Regulations for the Sisters at the Foundling Home*

Vincent and Louise collaborated in compiling a set of rules for the sisters at the Foundling Home. These rules contain excellent advice relative to the concern the sisters must have for the souls of the children as well as for their bodies. The laws of hygiene, primitive though they were, were to be scrupulously respected. In the observations made by Louise concerning the regulations, one can read after article six:

They will not allow the children to get up naked, as much to accustom them to decency and purity, as for the sake of their health. Neither shall they comb nor arrange the children's hair in drafty places, such as in the yard or in their room near open windows.<sup>108</sup>

Another precaution that had to be taken was that of keeping "the children from sleeping in the sun or in some unhealthy spots in any season whatever." In the winter, "do not let the children go too close to the open fire. Rather let the little ones keep warm by playing games although it may be necessary from time to time to let them go near the fire."<sup>109</sup>

When contagious diseases broke out, the children were to be separated into three groups: the healthy children in one, those suspected of coming down with the sickness in another, and those who were ill in a third. The regulations even gave specific details for preparing a special broth. However, if the health of the children was a matter of great importance, the obligation which fell upon their adopted mothers to watch over the moral formation of the little ones was not less so.

Precautions were to be taken against jealousy and against laziness. When it was necessary to punish the children, it was stated that at first it should be done by imposing little mortifications, or better still, "say some kind words which might encourage them to be good." If those warnings did not produce the desired effect, the sister was to notify the Sister Servant, "who would herself spank the naughty child (a custom of the time) but only after having first warned the offender calmly and some time after the fault had been made known. They were to be careful never to strike any child on the head."<sup>110</sup>



The moral formation of the children was complemented by a religious and technical education. The children were to be taught to repress their passions, to respect the law, and to live well with others so that they might one day become good citizens and useful workers. If the regulations pointed out to the sisters the means of succeeding, Louise profited by her stay at the Foundling Hospital to furnish them with the necessary instruments and materials to do so. True mother that she was, she provided for even the smallest details in a most touching manner. For instance, she wrote to Sister Hellot in 1647, to send her

100 needles, 25 or 30 thimbles, and little books like those from du Pont. The needles should all be of the same kind. Send a few sheets, about a half dozen suitable for cradles. If Sister Julienne has some thread, ask her to send some. We are teaching the little ones how to sew. Ask Monsieur Vincent if there are any printed alphabet charts that might be sent to us.<sup>111</sup>

Louise did not wish to leave the establishment until she had a school teacher “to teach them to sew and to read” and a priest “to instruct the boys.”<sup>112</sup> She also asked Vincent to send a Brother baker “in order to instruct us and to help us to cook well.”<sup>113</sup>

She noted in the regulations: “The sisters shall take care to see that all the thread and silk are carefully handled, that the children do their work, and that what is made at the house be sold. The sisters will make sure that the merchants pay them and they shall make known their profit to the Lady treasurer of the said Foundling Home.”<sup>114</sup>

### *Well-Ordered Service*

Louise ever insisted upon the necessity of the sisters keeping an account of the money which they handled. They were “to place it carefully in the hands of the Lady assigned to that office.”<sup>115</sup> She likewise insisted that the sisters obey the laws established in order to maintain good order in their service. Thus, the Sister Servant of the Hôtel Dieu, where there was a service affiliated with that of the Foundlings, was notified to be very careful “not to admit children before having fulfilled all the customary procedures, and having received a copy of the records relating to the children’s cases to send the records with the children to the establishment where they would be raised with the other children . . .”<sup>116</sup>

If Louise demanded that exactitude of her Daughters, it was that she gave them an unflinching example of such exactitude herself. Artists and



poets who have contributed to immortalize the charitable action of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac on behalf of the foundlings seem to neglect the fact that they were excellent administrators. The historical facts have become coated with legend, that has added much to the popularity of an elderly man who braved the dangers of night and the rigors of winter in order to carry foundlings picked up on the threshold of churches or on the streets of the city to the shelters provided by Mademoiselle and her Daughters, true guardian angels of the city, who awaited his arrival. The touching beauty of the scene cannot be denied but it is only symbolic of the historical fact that is even more beautiful than anything fiction can produce.

Let us rather consider the well-organized charitable action which documents prove. To offer but one striking example, we cite the request which Saint Vincent addressed to Louise around 1638:

Would we be willing to take charge of a foundling brought here yesterday by people of quality, who found the child in a nearby field? He is only two or three days old and was baptized last evening at Saint Laurent. Since he is a foundling, there is nothing to criticize in that unless you do not admit him either at the Couche or at the Hôtel Dieu. If you judge it expedient, we shall go through the customary procedures.<sup>117</sup>

Although Louise's answer to this letter is not extant, her habitual manner of acting and her many counsels, still treasured in the twentieth century by her Daughters, make us conclude that the foundling was not accepted until the admission procedures were followed.

The advice of the foundress is repeated today by those who replace her. Other Daughters of Louise, who are employed in public services, who administer infant homes or who function as social workers still hear, as it were, an echo of Louise's recommendations: "You are not free, then, to carry out this work according to your own fantasy. You must organize it in conformity with whatever instructions govern the service and in the spirit it demands of you."<sup>118</sup>

That admirable genius for organization lay at the foundation of the associations these two saints founded, and which continue to perpetuate themselves without limit of time or space.

An extract from the correspondence of Saint Vincent de Paul gives evidence of the same concern for organized service in the work with children. His is a tactfully worded reply sent to Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi concerning a child found at Villepreux, whom he was trying to



place at the Foundling Hospital in Paris. "It is forbidden," wrote Vincent, "for those who are in charge of the care of said children to admit them by any other means than by the order of the commissaries. We feel that it is a matter of conscience to comply with this procedure."<sup>119</sup>

### *Devotedness of the Sisters*

It is not surprising that the Daughters understood and applied so well the lessons they learned under the common direction of two saints. Their work was certainly not devoid of fatigue, but that fatigue was sweet to them, because it was accompanied by great consolations which encouraged them to pursue their tasks with increased zeal. There, as everywhere, the charity of the sisters went even further than what their Mother prescribed.

The sisters would often carry the babies on their back in order to avoid for their little charges the violent shaking of carriages. Sister Françoise Fanchon was always the first at the door of the Hôtel Dieu to welcome "the foundlings whom the Administrators collected at almost any hour, but especially at night."<sup>120</sup> She carried them whenever possible to the House of the Faubourg Saint Lazare, where the Bureau for hiring nurses was located. This charitable action she practiced her entire life even when she was placed elsewhere. It is recorded of her that as an older Sister, she was still seen trudging through the streets of the capital "laden with a basket on her back and carrying a foundling."<sup>121</sup> Another of the Daughters, Sister Lullen, said that "it seemed to her as though she was kissing the feet of the little Jesus" when she kissed those of the little ones entrusted to her.<sup>122</sup> Love and education accomplished great things!

### *Financial Difficulties Increase*

It was not easy to administer such a vast and complex work as the Foundlings. Vincent and Louise often found their good will paralyzed. The Ladies became discouraged when money was lacking. Experience proved that private initiative alone could never furnish the needed funds. It was necessary to appeal to the Royal Treasury<sup>123</sup> to make up the enormous deficit. Finally, the king himself became interested in the lot

of the foundlings. By letters patent of 1642, Louis XIII granted to the work an annual income of 4,000 *livres*, "in title of alms and property."<sup>124</sup> Other gifts followed that one. The Queen Regent, Anne of Austria, declared in the name of her son, "that imitating the piety and charity of the deceased king, which are truly royal virtues, the king adds to the first gift another annual gift of 8,000 *livres*."<sup>125</sup>

In 1643, the duchess d'Aiguillon donated 5,000 *livres*.<sup>126</sup> The wife of the Chancellor d'Aligre and the President de Bercy contributed generously. Madame de Miramion contributed an unknown sum but it must have been considerable, according to her biographer's statement, "if one is to judge by the tenderness which she had for the poor little foundlings."<sup>127</sup>

In spite of those contributions, financial difficulties continued to worry the treasurer to the point of discouragement. Louise shared her uneasiness. Vincent in his optimistic way continued to stimulate charitable zeal, and the work continued to expand. In 1643, the saintly priest estimated that the number of children helped by the Daughters of Louise since 1638<sup>128</sup> was about 1,200. He also noted that the number of sisters who were employed in that good work had increased to ten or twelve. One can well imagine how heavy the financial burden became. The Ladies, frightened by their task, had about made up their mind to abandon the work. It was at that time that Saint Vincent made his famous appeal:

Ladies, it was your compassion and your charity that moved you to adopt those little ones as your own children. You have been their mothers in the order of grace, since their mothers according to nature abandoned them. Consider whether you want to abandon them also. Cease being their mothers now to become their judges. Their life and their death are in your hands. I am going to ask you to cast your votes. The time has come to decide whether you want to discontinue your mercy toward them or not. If you continue to take charitable care of them, they will live. On the contrary, if you abandon them, they will infallibly die. Experience does not allow you to think otherwise.<sup>129</sup>

The assembly responded unanimously in favor of continuing the care of foundlings. According to Abelly, it was after that talk that the Ladies obtained the buildings of the chateau de Bicêtre, where the children who had been weaned were sheltered for some time.



### *The "Thirteen Houses": The First Nursery*

Vincent himself had partly resolved the problem of the lodging of the little ones by having a group of thirteen houses built on the Saint Laurent field, near Saint Lazare. These were twentieth century "cottage type" nurseries in miniature. Father Coste published Saint Vincent de Paul's declaration "that he used the sum of 64,000 *livres* for the building of thirteen houses adjoining one another on a sight called the field of Saint Laurent, situated in the suburb of Saint Denis of the city of Paris. . . which thirteen houses belonged to the Priests of the Mission of Sedan."<sup>130</sup>

On August 22, 1645, Vincent leased those houses for 300 *livres* to the Ladies of Charity to be used for the foundlings.

### *During the Civil War*

There, as at Bicêtre, Louise encountered great difficulties. As troubles of the Fronde continued, the peace of the establishment was once more threatened. In 1652, the troops of Turenne and of Condé were fighting at the very doors of the house. A letter of thanks written by Vincent to Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, who proposed to put the children in a safer place, informs us that "in the heat of combat the nursing women of the establishment were so terrified at seeing before their eyes the killing of the soldiers that they all left with the girls carrying their babies, and left the other children asleep in their cribs."<sup>131</sup>

In her turn, Louise wrote to Vincent to tell him of the fear of the sisters. She let him know also that she had decided "to have wheat delivered by some soldiers, whom they would pay for their trouble, so as not to have those poor children starve."<sup>132</sup> A few days later she was able to tell one of the sisters that thanks to God, they had been frightened but not hurt in any way. "All the sisters and the children's nurses" had been able to remain although most of the people in the neighborhood had left the suburb.<sup>133</sup>

A letter from Saint Vincent de Paul to his confrere Father Lambert pointed out that during the troubled times of civil war, Louise did not limit her concern to the foundlings but that she directed tremendous efforts to alleviate the misery of the numerous refugees and poor. Vincent then described the work of the soup kitchens tended by the Daughters of Charity.

At the house where Mademoiselle Le Gras resides, the poor Daughters of Charity make and distribute soup daily to about 1,300 shameful poor. In the Faubourg Saint Denis they do the same for 800 refugees, and in the parish of Saint Paul alone, four or five of those Daughters provide soup for 5,000 poor persons, to say nothing of the 60 to 80 sick persons they have on their hands. There are other Daughters who are doing the same thing in other places.<sup>134</sup>

Louise herself remarked, "We are in parishes where there are up to 5,000 poor to whom we give soup. In our own parish we distribute it to 2,000 without counting the sick."<sup>135</sup>

During the following years, the subject of the foundlings was hardly ever mentioned in the correspondence between Vincent and Louise. The difficulties of the beginning of the work had all but disappeared.

In 1654, the "Thirteen Houses" began admitting, from the maternity ward of the Hôtel Dieu, children whose mothers had either died or abandoned their babies there.<sup>136</sup>

### *Private Work Administered by the General Hospital in 1670*

In 1670, the king ordered the Foundlings placed under the authority of the General Hospital's administration. With that decree there was implemented the practical principle that the support of foundlings is the responsibility of all citizens through the instrumentality of the public agency that represents them. The decree incorporated the work into the General Hospital while permitting it to function in its own right.<sup>137</sup>

We do not propose to follow up the work of the foundlings beyond the time when it became a public institution. In our day much more is accomplished than Vincent de Paul and his collaborator Louise de Marillac did, but they have the great merit of having set the work in motion and of having planted the seed from which has sprung everything that society has since done in favor of foundlings.

Louise, who was always preoccupied with the future of that good work, had proposed to Saint Vincent that he suggest to the Ladies of Charity that they include bequests to the work of the foundlings in their wills.<sup>138</sup> Until the end of her days, she sought means of doing more and more for the abandoned children she had adopted into her large family of poor.

Three months before her death she mentioned the foundlings for the last time in her correspondence:



My Most Honored Father, you also have been reflecting for a long time on the most effective means of caring for the little ones. I beg Our Lord to make His will known in this as He does in all other matters, and to give us the grace to fulfill it faithfully.<sup>139</sup>

Today the Daughters of Charity still accept as a directive to be faithfully followed what Saint Vincent said to their first sisters in 1643:

I am persuaded you often feel very fond of them. O my Daughters, you cannot have enough affection for them. You may be quite certain that you will not offend God by loving them too much, because they are His children, and the reason why you devote yourselves to their service is His love.<sup>140</sup>

## Chapter 3

### ***THE IGNORANCE OF POOR LITTLE GIRLS***

*Let us take great pleasure in instructing  
to the best of our ability the poor little creatures  
redeemed by the blood of the Son of God  
that they may praise Him and glorify Him eternally.  
Saint Louise de Marillac*

Under the direction of Saint Vincent, Louise understood more and more clearly that charity should be accompanied by instruction. He taught her that as much by his example as by his advice.

She was likewise distressed by the painful realization of prevailing misery. Her director's admirable activities motivated her to find means to remedy that ignorance which caused "the poor rural population to die of hunger and to damn themselves."<sup>1</sup> Both were convinced that it was necessary to relieve suffering, but to prevent it became their essential objective. To that end there seemed to be no better means than education. As a result, "Les Petites Ecoles" or little schools were established.

#### *Education in Saint Vincent de Paul's Time*

The pernicious influence of the wars of religion had caused havoc in the area of education as well as in all others. Formerly, elementary education had been widespread. The Venetian ambassador Marino Giustiniano stated that in 1535, "everybody, no matter how poor, learned to read and to write."<sup>2</sup> Employers who accepted children for apprenticeship and housewives who employed little girls for domestic service were required to pledge that they would send them to school. However, in consequence of lootings, arsons and destruction caused by the wars, Henry IV had to admit in letters patent of June 1590, that illiteracy was on the increase in the kingdom, owing to the prolongation of the civil wars.

The first half of the seventeenth century witnessed the foundation of



new congregations in the Church whose apostolate was the instruction of young girls. However, these congregations were rather confined to cities and larger towns. In his conference to the Daughters of Charity on August 16, 1641, Saint Vincent remarked, "The city is almost fully supplied with sisters. Hence it is only right that you should go to work in the country."<sup>3</sup> And to Mademoiselle Le Gras he wrote encouraging her to see that the Daughters learned "to read and to do needlework that they might be able to work in the country."<sup>4</sup>

The State took no interest in the instruction of children in the villages and in the country.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, most of the villages and towns were deprived of vigilant and learned pastors who might have attended to the religious education of the children. This had been worrying Saint Vincent for some time. He was all the more upset by the criticism made to him by a heretic that "the Catholics of the rural districts are abandoned to vicious and ignorant pastors who do not instruct them in their duties so that most of the people do not even know in what the Christian religion consists."<sup>6</sup> To alleviate this sad condition, he had sent missionaries to evangelize the poor country people. Now he turned his attention to the children of these poor people and entrusted them to his able co-worker.

### *Louise de Marillac, Educator—Her Own Formation*

While she was still very young, Louise's gifted mind was cultivated through the study of literature, the arts, the sciences, Latin and even philosophy, which her father taught her, "in order to form her judgment and to prepare her for higher education."<sup>7</sup> He often conversed with her and enjoyed the wisdom of her reflections and the extent of her knowledge. Her first studies had been undertaken at the Royal Monastery of Saint Louis at Poissy, where the personnel and the surroundings breathed the atmosphere of high society as well as that of the Great Century.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly frightened by the luxury of an education superior to his fortune, Louise's father withdrew her from Poissy and had her enrolled in a boarding establishment in Paris, "so that she might learn to do work suitable to her condition."<sup>9</sup> That was a providential change for the one whom God destined to form good village girls. In Paris, her highly-developed education was completed by the kind of pedagogical domestic and professional training which is ordinarily given by one's mother! Besides these programs, Louise had profited by many lessons learned at



the school of experience. It was there especially that she learned that to develop a human being it is necessary first of all to know something about his background and the role he is called to play in life.

### *Louise is Ready*

During her visitations of the Confraternities, Louise established schools of charity, visited those already in existence, gave them support and, if needed, reorganized them. That kept her going almost without respite from one village to another. She had begun her first round of such visitations on May 6, 1629.

A letter of Saint Vincent dated 1631, mentions the great good which Mademoiselle Le Gras had accomplished at Montmirail and at Villepreux with respect to the education of poor girls, and asks "the Reverend Pastor kindly to notify his parishioners at the Sunday sermon and to urge them to send their daughters to the living quarters of the said Lady. . . ."<sup>10</sup>

Louise was not satisfied with personally teaching catechism to the children of the villages because she was thinking that after her departure there would be no one to continue the work of education she had begun. She considered her visit complete only when she had been able to provide a teacher in her place. Referring to that concern, Gobillon wrote, "If there was a school teacher in the place, she gave her useful directions; if there was none, she trained one."<sup>11</sup>

The first of those teachers who came to be formed at the school of Louise de Marillac was Marguerite Naseau, who has remained throughout the centuries the ideal type of the true Servant of the Poor.<sup>12</sup> In speaking of Marguerite's previous formation, Vincent attested that she never had any other "master or mistress than God Himself." In very simple and touching words, he continued:

Moved by a powerful inspiration from heaven, she had the thought of instructing children, bought an alphabet, but not able to go to school for instruction, she would go to ask the pastor or the assistant to tell her what the first four letters of the alphabet were. Another time she would ask what the next four were, and so on for the rest. Later, while minding her cows, she would study her lesson. If anyone passed by who seemed to know how to read, she would ask him, 'Sir, how does one pronounce that word?'<sup>13</sup>

That was how Marguerite, in the open air, had learned to read the hard way. She progressed from one letter of the alphabet to the next and finally,



she was reading one sentence after another. The thought then came to her to instruct other village girls. Before making up her mind, she consulted Monsieur Vincent, telling him how she had taught herself and asking if it would be a good idea to open a small school. "Yes indeed," he replied, "I advise you to do so." She rejoiced when she saw that two or three of her first pupils were also devoting themselves to the instruction of children in one village then in another. Enrollment in her classes ever increased. Older girls soon joined the younger ones. For the girls who could not come during the day, she would devote her nights "and all that without motive of vanity or self-interest, without any other design than that of the glory of God." Trials were not lacking to Marguerite in her life of devotedness, for "the more she worked for the instruction of youth, the more the villagers made fun of her and calumniated her. However, zeal and ardor for her work only increased."<sup>14</sup>

It was not always easy to find "good girls" like Marguerite who could be trained as school teachers. The following lines penned in 1632 refer to the difficulties of recruitment:

I really think it would be well to place a school mistress at Villeneuve, but where shall we find her? Germaine would like to go there, as I can tell from a letter written to me by Father Belin. But how can we take her away from Villepreux unless we replace her by another, and that other, where shall we find her? If convenient for you, we shall talk about this some day next week when you are here. Meanwhile you can tell the mothers of your pupils that we hope to send them a teacher as soon as we are able to do so, or that you will go to see them and confer with them about the housing and upkeep of that school mistress.<sup>15</sup>

It was all settled in such a way that as the Charities continued to be established, clauses were included in the contracts of establishment that stipulated the powers and the duties of the school mistresses. An even more effective solution was incorporated in regulations written by Louise and reviewed by Monsieur Vincent:

The Superioress shall admit into said Confraternity the village girls whom she judges suitable for that office. She shall teach them the manner of assisting the poor sick and the methods for teaching well in the country schools. On their part, the girls will teach the village girls and will try to train some of them to do the same during their absence. They shall do all that for the love of God and without expecting any remuneration.<sup>16</sup>

A few months later, the first Daughters of Louise left the house where they had been living in community in order to go, at least two together, to the service of the sick poor and the instruction of youth.

Their services were desired in many localities. In 1636, the Duchess of Liancourt asked for them. Two years later the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, who had just established a Confraternity of Charity at Richelieu, asked for two Daughters to teach school and to help the Ladies in assisting the victims of an epidemic that ravaged the population of that region. Saint Vincent rejoiced that the “two Servants of the Poor whom we sent there are doing marvels, one with the sick, the other in instructing young girls.”<sup>17</sup>

On August 21, 1640, the Marquise de Maignelay wrote to Vincent:

Sometime ago I wrote to Mademoiselle Poulailion to find out whether or not Mademoiselle Le Gras might be able to send some good school mistress for the girls of this place (Nanteuil). They are anxious that she might be able to teach them a trade because without that, the inhabitants of this place will refuse to withdraw their children from a school master with whom it costs them scarcely anything and where the girls are instructed with boys. As you know, this is a rather dangerous situation.<sup>18</sup>

The sisters were far less numerous than the requests being submitted and they were, for the most part, uneducated themselves. More than once Vincent suggested to Louise to consider “the means necessary to teach the girls how to become teachers.”<sup>19</sup>

### *Louise Trains Her Daughters to Become Good Teachers*

According to the daily schedule drawn up in 1633, a time was set aside after Mass when the Daughters were to read for their own instruction.<sup>20</sup> That exercise was to be repeated in the evening, after which “they were to repeat the principal points of Christian doctrine in the form of a small catechism.”<sup>21</sup> One of the first sisters affirmed that Mademoiselle Le Gras “taught the sisters herself how to read and made them repeat their Christian doctrine.”<sup>22</sup>

Saint Vincent lent a helping hand by encouraging the work. “How I wish,” he wrote, “that your Daughters might apply themselves to learn how to read and to learn well the catechism which you teach them.”<sup>23</sup> However, in speaking to the Daughters he insisted that learning was not to be for their



personal gratification but in order to render themselves capable of instructing little girls in the places where they would be employed.<sup>24</sup>

Those uneducated girls who were enrolled in Louise's school did not receive an education comparable to hers, for they were destined to teach poor little village girls of seventeenth century France. Their method of training was adapted to their needs. The aim was not to make learned women of them but to inculcate a basic knowledge of religion,<sup>25</sup> reading and writing so that they might be able to impart the same to their young pupils. All was to be subordinated to the formation of good Christians. One must remember that in the seventeenth century, the word "instruction" did not have the same meaning as it has today.<sup>26</sup> It meant "education" and implied the complete intellectual and moral formation of the child in both supernatural and natural dimensions. The notion of separating religious instruction or Christian formation from the other disciplines that constituted the curriculum would never have occurred to an educator of the time. At the Motherhouse of the period, Saint Louise organized a "Little School" which was destined to serve as a normal school for her Daughters. Once trained themselves, they would set out to win little children for Christ.

### *First "Little School" Directed by the Daughters of Charity*

When Louise arrived in the parish of Saint Laurent, she became interested in providing instruction for the poor little girls of the Faubourg Saint-Denis. With the authorization of the Chancellor of Notre Dame, the person then in supreme authority, she opened for those little girls a free school to be directed by the Daughters of Charity. This tiny mustard seed was to become a huge tree. According to the statistics given in 1849 by the Commission of Education, they had nearly 110,000 children enrolled in the little schools. This total accounted for children in communal schools in France but did not include the little girls in the schools of Paris.<sup>27</sup>

Saint Laurent was one of the poorest and most extensive parishes of Paris, "where a large segment of the population driven from the extremities of the city because of great misery had sought shelter in the shadow of Saint Laurent's steeple."<sup>28</sup> The request that Louise addressed to the Chancellor Michel le Masle, Director of the Little Schools of Paris and of the suburbs, expressed the aim she had in mind. She wrote to him:

The great number of poor who are in the Faubourg Saint-Denis makes us desire to take charge of their instruction. It is much to be feared that evil will get the upper hand and imperil the salvation of those poor little girls if they remain in their present state of ignorance. On the other hand, I trust that God will be glorified if the poor, even if they are unable to contribute anything, can freely send their children to school, without rich people preventing them from obtaining this good. In fine, those little souls, redeemed by the blood of the Son of God will be obliged to pray for you, Sir, both in time and in eternity.<sup>29</sup>

Louise did not have to wait long for the solicited authorization, which she received on May 29, 1641:

By reason of our position as Chancellor of the said Church of Paris, the direction and the government of the Little Schools of the Faubourgs and of the suburbs of Paris concern us and belong to us. After having examined the report sent by your pastor, and the testimony submitted by other trustworthy persons, and having obtained knowledge of your life, your moral rectitude and Catholic faith, we find you worthy of administering schools. To that effect we grant you the license and faculty to administer the schools and to conduct them at the location you requested, in the street known as the Saint Lazare Quarter in the Faubourg Saint-Denis, and we grant you the authorization to teach poor little girls only, and no others, and to train them in good living, to educate them in grammar and other pious and worthwhile subjects after having sworn to administer diligently and faithfully the said schools, according to our statutes and ordinances.<sup>30</sup>

According to the custom of the time,<sup>31</sup> Louise must have affixed at the door or at a window of the house, a sign reading:

There exists a "Little School" in this building.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

school mistress,

teaches young children:

Divine Service, reading, writing,

composition, and grammar.

This was the first experience in Paris of a work to which the Company of the Daughters of Charity became more and more devoted.

That first "Little School" in Paris remained the object of Louise's very particular care and solicitude. Among her writings there is a sketch of



another school under construction, possibly in the year 1655. This one was larger but built in a very simple style. Louise would ever insist upon both simplicity of construction and simplicity of education. In her letters she often recalled to the sisters their obligation of practising this simplicity. "It would be very dangerous for our sisters," she told them, "to desire to speak in a learned fashion, not only because it might incline us to vanity, but still more for fear of falling into error."<sup>32</sup> Her advice in this matter became at times very formal:

The manner of instructing at La Fère presents the danger of the sister teaching her own opinions or advancing theories she is unable to explain. Besides, instructing in as public a place as the wards of the hospital might lead people to accuse the Superiors of the Daughters of Charity of permitting their subject to undertake too much.<sup>33</sup>

By insisting upon a simple and practical instruction, Louise was acting in conformity with the customs of a century during which children received a very limited formal education. Reading and writing were judged quite sufficient as the greater importance was given to the salvation of their souls. Fagniez has shown how the education of women in the first half of the seventeenth century stressed the formation of a good conscience by instruction and religious practices. The general aim of education for women was to form housewives respectful of social customs rather than learned scholars.<sup>34</sup> Since that was the case for the bourgeoisie of society, it is not astonishing that Louise was so concerned about the practical element in the education of poor girls in the villages as well as in the cities. She understood that most of those children would live and die at their work on the farm.

However, Saint Vincent authorized the school mistresses to study thoroughly the truths of religion. When Saint Louise asked him whether or not the sisters should be allowed to make use of a catechism whose explanation of doctrine seemed to her elevated, he answered in the affirmative:

It would be good to have it read to our sisters and for you to explain it to them so that they might all learn it and understand it sufficiently to teach it, for in order to be able to instruct others they must have knowledge themselves.<sup>35</sup>

Saint Vincent expressed much the same thought in one of his Conferences to the Daughters of Charity:

Holy Scripture says that well-regulated charity begins with

oneself and that the soul must be preferred to the body. It is necessary for the Daughters of Charity to teach the poor all that is necessary for their salvation. For that reason, the sisters must first be instructed themselves before being able to teach others.<sup>36</sup>

For want of a diocesan manual, Louise herself composed a little catechism to help her sisters. It is a model of its kind by the clarity of its explanations, its conciseness and its tone, which is at once cheerful and lively. We find in it the active method so much applauded today as the children are encouraged to dramatize what they learn.

A typical extract from the manuscript, kept in the Archives of the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity, illustrates the simple conversational method developed in family fashion with the children of the villages:

“What does it mean ‘to be damned?’”

“It means one is in hell.”

“What is hell, and what does one do there?”

“It is a place in which one will never see God nor be able to love Him. One suffers dreadful torments there.”

“Does one have to stay a long time in hell?”

“Forever.” The simple dialogue between teacher and pupils continues:

“Is eternity one hundred years?”

“It is longer than one can say because one never gets out of hell.”

“You say that in hell one cannot love God. Can we love Him in the world?”

“Yes, if we so desire.”<sup>37</sup>

A word of encouragement would then follow to fill all these little ones with love for God. The teacher might use a story, an example or a comparison that would make her instructions on things pertaining to God more understandable to those poor little girls. The children were frequently reminded to think of God while doing their work and to repeat “God sees me!” Further questioning was then suggested as a means of helping the little ones grasp the meaning of the presence of God.

Louise de Marillac did more than catechize children, she prepared catechism teachers for them.

### *Louise Follows the Teachers in Their Work*

The correspondence of Saint Louise reveals her vigilance. She strove to develop and improve the work of teaching, the importance of which



she was fully aware. "Teach the children the love and fear of God rather than the art of speaking about Him,"<sup>38</sup> she advised frequently.

She recommended to Sister Anne Hardemont to be exact in giving instructions in catechism and good morals as well as in similar subjects.<sup>39</sup> At times she asked for more detailed news about Sister Anne at Fontainebleau "particularly concerning the manner in which she instructs the little girls."<sup>40</sup> On other occasions she wanted to know "the number of pupils at Chars,"<sup>41</sup> "how many there are at Richelieu" and "whether the big girls go to see you on feast days in order to listen to the readings and instructions you impart to the little ones."<sup>42</sup> To another sister, she gives a word of encouragement and advice "to have great care of the instruction of youth and to maintain good order in your school. . . ."<sup>43</sup>

Louise wrote to the school mistresses at Ussel expressing the wish that "they show poor girls all they could and that they remember that the most essential was what concerned the knowledge of God and His love."<sup>44</sup> To other sisters, she sent the recommendation "to instruct the little girls well not only in their faith, but also in the manner of living as good Christians."<sup>45</sup>

### *Nothing Escapes Her Solitude*

How astonished Louise was to learn that the Ladies of Charity had not even thought of setting aside a place at Bicêtre for a school for the foundlings. At once she undertook the preparation of classrooms. She assured Vincent that she had seen "a room downstairs quite suited to boys, who must be kept separate from the girls. It looks as if it will only be necessary to put in a door and to enclose the windows. The girls can be taught upstairs."<sup>46</sup>

We have already seen her endeavors to secure a school mistress who might teach the children how to sew and to read, and also her efforts to provide needles, thimbles and books.<sup>47</sup> According to the regulations that were drawn up, as soon as the children had reached their fifth year, they were to be taught their letters and catechism. All were required to learn to read, but the boys were also taught to write. Hours for manual work were also scheduled.<sup>48</sup>

Formation in good morals claimed the greatest attention. For example, Louise encouraged Sister Marie "to welcome her pupils kindly and to teach them to knit stockings, but above all to instruct them in their catechism and in the practice of virtue."<sup>49</sup> She advised Sister Claude

Brigitte to show great kindness when she instructed little girls "but not to let their faults go uncorrected."<sup>50</sup> Vincent was delighted to hear that one of the Daughters of Charity sent to Liancourt knew how to make lace. He wrote to Louise, "She will be able to teach the poor people to do the same, and by that means she will be able to draw them to spiritual matters."<sup>51</sup>

The first lesson was to teach the ordinary prayers in use and to have them memorized. Morning and evening prayers were said in common. Two catechism classes were held weekly, one on Thursday evening and the other on Saturday morning. One of the greatest concerns of the teachers was to prepare the children for the reception of the sacraments. Louise wrote encouragingly on that subject:

This Lenten season is a time of real harvest for the little girls at school, for they can be instructed and well prepared to spend this holy time piously. It can serve to dispose them to make their Easter duties worthily, especially those who will be making their First Holy Communion.<sup>52</sup>

Nothing was spared in helping the teachers develop good methods in their vocation as educators. When Louise heard of the good results obtained by the teaching methods used by the Ursulines, she wrote to Vincent: "I would so much like to have some alphabet charts to hang on the walls. This is the method of the Ursulines."<sup>53</sup>

To prepare the Daughters for their work, Madame de Chaumont offered the services of a young girl who had been a teacher at the Ursulines for six years. Louise rejoiced over the offer, for not only did that young girl "know what those good nuns teach," but besides, "she does excellent work in tapestry."<sup>54</sup>

It is quite probable that Louise was familiar with the regulations observed by the Ursulines for the instruction of little girls in the elementary schools. According to Bernoville, her uncle Michel de Marillac had in 1606 taught the future Ursulines of Paris "various intellectual disciplines."<sup>55</sup> Louise had taken little Madeleine d'Attichy to the Ursuline Convent, where later she entered that Religious Order.<sup>56</sup> In their work of education those religious also stressed the need of spending most of the time teaching little girls "to read, to write and to perform other little tasks suitable to their age and their sex. Nevertheless, they will remember that Christian doctrine is the first and principal thing they must teach them in simple and familiar words."<sup>57</sup> Their aim was to give a doctrinal and practical formation, an aim which corresponded to the general education for little girls destined to become future mothers of families.<sup>58</sup>



In answer to the suggestion of Vincent that all the school sisters should use the same method, Louise assured one of her Daughters, "As soon as I shall know it entirely I shall not fail to inform you of it."<sup>59</sup>

A few years later, Vincent rejoiced over the news he had just received from Narbonne: "I was told marvelous things about our sisters. Sister Frances was sent by the Bishop of Narbonne to a city quite a distance from there in order to learn an excellent method for the instruction of youth. She learned it thoroughly and is putting it into practice to the great edification of everybody."<sup>60</sup>

"It was thus," testified Monsieur Celier, "that the Daughters of Charity began to teach children on a small scale in order to remedy, as much as they could, an evil they perceived. They helped young girls adapt themselves to revolutionary changes in customs, more lasting and more serious than those of political institutions."<sup>61</sup>

### *Instruction of "Poor Little Girls" and of Other Poor*

The work of the "Little Schools," like all the other works of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, was marked by flexibility and adaptation. If teachers were not available for children of well-to-do families, those children could be admitted in the schools of the Daughters of Charity, but only on condition "that the poor girls be given preference to the rich, and that the latter not look down on the poor." Moreover, the pastor's favorable approval was required before such children were admitted.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the regular classes in the schools, the sisters gathered the women and young girls of the environs for religious instruction on Sundays and holydays. Saint Louise was greatly interested in that apostolate for she realized that "the older girls sometimes need instruction more than the little ones. . ."<sup>63</sup> Good psychologist that she was she added, "Teach them kindly and gently without making them feel mortified at their ignorance."<sup>64</sup> For fear that the word *catechism* might cause them to hesitate, she advised the sisters not to use it with the older girls but to say to them instead, "Today we will read." After a short reading, the sisters were to give them some familiar explanations, "but never anything beyond their level of understanding."<sup>65</sup>

Saint Louise encouraged the first sisters to undertake teaching the older girls in view of the salvation of their souls. She recommended that the sisters "hold the reading classes on Sundays and holydays in the after-



noon, and that they talk to them about the feast days."<sup>66</sup> They were also "to encourage them to visit the sisters."<sup>67</sup> Three months before her death, she wrote to Sister Charlotte Royer at Richelieu to ask her "whether the older girls go to see you on feast days to listen to the reading and to the instruction which you give to the little ones."<sup>68</sup> This was modern religious education in embryonic form.

The interest of Louise was not limited to girls. In all the poor she saw Jesus Christ. Therefore she lost no occasion for evangelizing. She could transform any place into a catechism classroom: the coach in which she traveled, the inn where she stopped, the village church where she prayed, the hospital ward where sweetly she would ask the patient how he intended to make his journey to heaven, the homes of the poor where children were quizzed on their knowledge of the Blessed Trinity, this being done with the intention of reaching the parents through the children.

She wished her Daughters to imitate her, recommending to them that when they traveled they should adore the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of the place where they stopped, go and visit the poor in the hospice, "catechize those they would meet, distributing to them holy pictures, and instructing even the servants of the inn who often stood in need of thinking about their eternal salvation."<sup>69</sup>

Louise's choice fell on the bashful, the shamefaced and the poor. They were the ones she destined for her Daughters. When the Queen asked for two sisters for the Charity at "Fontaine-belle-eau," Louise hastened to write to the sisters to encourage them and to urge them "to welcome, as much as possible, the poor."<sup>70</sup> On hearing of the visit of the Queen to the establishment, which already numbered seventy little pupils, Louise notified the Sister Servant not to let the respect due to the person of Her Majesty make her fear to approach her, for "her virtue and charity give confidence to the lowliest subjects to expose their needs to her." Louise concluded: "Above all, do not fail to acquaint her with the true needs of the Poor."<sup>71</sup>

This same concern for the Poor inspired her to send her Daughters "into their homes and to the fields" in order to teach the children who were needed to help at home or with the heavy work of the farm. She realized that when classes began at eight-thirty in the morning, children who had to do chores could not arrive on time. Therefore she prescribed that the sisters "welcome at any time little girls who would like to come to learn something. As they may be of all ages, the sisters will tactfully assign a special place for those who are timid, giving them a warm welcome, even



though they should come during the sisters' meal time or very late. They will urge them to form the habit of praying on their knees morning and evening. They should reward with little prizes those who are assiduous."<sup>72</sup>

Elsewhere, Louise suggests to a school sister that she maintain, as much as possible, regular hours for teaching, "except in the case of poor little girls who go begging for their bread or those who are hired out to earn their living, which girls must always be preferred to others and must be welcomed whenever they present themselves and be attended to according to their needs."<sup>73</sup>

When we read these recommendations made in the seventeenth century by Saint Louise de Marillac in order to promote the principles of education for girls, we can only bless the Lord for developing into a mighty oak the humble acorn she planted. In our twentieth century, little girls on the five continents still come by the thousands to Louise's Daughters to learn the principles of Christian life and the essentials of the knowledge necessary to womanhood. Some points of the "Rules for the school mistresses" may have changed with the centuries, but the essential spirit of those Rules remain. Saint Louise's wisdom still radiates in these lines imbued with a supernatural spirit:

The School Mistress will often think of the great happiness which is hers, of having been called by God to cooperate with Him in the salvation of poor girls who perhaps some day would have been damned, had they not received the instruction which she gives them. . .

She will take great care to learn well herself what she must teach to others, particularly that which pertains to matters of faith and morals. . .

She will begin instructing them, whether in catechism or morals, only after having previously asked the the assistance of the Holy Spirit. . .

She will do her utmost to train those poor little creatures in good habits and prevent them from contracting bad ones, realizing the great difficulty there is in breaking them if they have already been contracted. . .

She should also be aware that all sorts of girls must not be admitted to her school, but only those who are poor. However, if Divine Providence and obedience call her to a parish where there is no teacher for the instruction of those who are wealthy, and if parents greatly insist upon their being admitted among the

other pupils, in that case, she may receive them with the approval of the Reverend Pastor, but on condition that she will act in such a manner that the poor be always preferred to the rich and that the latter not look down upon the rest. . .

All things being considered, she must realize that unless God Himself instruct the children entrusted to her care, she will find her efforts and skill to teach them quite useless. This is why she must often recommend them to Our Lord entreating Him to pour His graces and blessings upon the pupils that they may profit from His instructions and upon herself that she may faithfully discharge her duties so that together they may receive the reward promised them in heaven.<sup>74</sup>



## Chapter 4

### ***THE MISERY OF GALLEY SLAVES***

*Keep in mind those who are in prison as though you were in prison with them; and those who are being badly treated, since you too are in the one body.*  
*Heb. 13:3*

Saint Vincent de Paul had a very special respect for the Daughters of Charity, and their title of “Servants of the Poor” touched him deeply. In his last conferences to them he would repeat frequently, “Oh! What a beautiful title! It is as if one were to say ‘Servant of Jesus Christ’ since He claims as done to Himself all that is done to His members.”<sup>1</sup>

In October 1655, speaking to the sisters about the service rendered to the galley slaves, he suddenly paused and then exclaimed:

Oh! Sisters, what happiness it is to serve those poor galley slaves abandoned into the hands of people who have no pity for them. I have seen those wretched men treated like beasts. God was touched with compassion at the sight. He had pity on them, and as a result, His goodness did two things in their favor. First, He had a house purchased for them; secondly, He wished to arrange things in such a manner that they might be served by His own Daughters, since to say Daughter of Charity is the same as saying Daughter of God.<sup>2</sup>

More perhaps than any of the unfortunate ones helped by the Daughters of Charity, the galley slaves had a claim to the solicitude of the saintly old man, whose interest and charity in their regard had been manifest for more than thirty years. The news of the marvels which he had accomplished in their regard had reached the court, and the king appointed him General Chaplain of the galleys on February 8, 1619. This assignment permitted him greater personal initiative and facilitated his entrance into the prisons of the Conciergerie and into the other prisons of the capital, where the galley slaves awaited the departure of the chain gang to man the galleys at Marseilles.

Those condemned souls, worn out by the weight of heavy chains,

suffering from fever and deprived of all spiritual and corporal assistance, had so touched his heart that he petitioned the Procurator General, under whose authority were all the prisons, to better the condition of the galley slaves, especially that of the sick ones. Yielding to Vincent's plea, the Procurator General brought about their transfer from the cells of the Conciergerie to a house in the faubourg Saint-Honoré near the church of Saint Roch.<sup>3</sup>

Since that good work had no resources, Cardinal de Retz appealed to his clergy on June 1, 1618, to recommend those unfortunate creatures to the charity of the faithful. According to Collet, that appeal resulted not only in generous gifts but encouraged "pious and charitable persons to enter the prisons in order to instruct and console the galley slaves."<sup>4</sup>

#### *As Early as 1632 Louise Visited the Galley Slaves*

It is quite possible that Louise de Marillac was numbered among those charitable persons who visited the prisoners. After her marriage in 1613, she lived in the parish of Saint Merry as a devoted wife and mother. In spite of her very busy days, her hours of leisure were reserved for the unfortunate. One of her servants who had observed her good works testified that she took them sweets and jams, biscuits and other good things. Besides, "she would comb their hair, clean their infected wounds, wash away the vermin, and even prepare the deceased for burial."<sup>5</sup>

She also counted among her happiest moments those spent with the Daughters of the Passion, who welcomed her to share their poor meals and to unite with them in their prayers and religious exercises. Their life had so attracted her that she had expressed the desire of becoming a cloistered religious, but the Reverend Honoré de Champigny, a Capuchin priest, judged her too weak to bear the austerities of that kind of life. Louise had resigned herself to that refusal, seeing in it the Will of God, but continued to frequent the company of those holy souls. Those visits brought her very near the house in the faubourg Saint Honoré, recently rented for the galley slaves.

It is very likely, knowing the zeal which devoured Louise for all those who suffered, that as early as 1618, she may have belonged to that noble group of ladies of whom Bourdaloue said:

You go down, Ladies, into those dens where the justice of men exercises its full rigor. You try to pierce the darkness of those



miserable abodes. If you can, open your eyes and behold in the midst of that darkness a wretched creature weighed down by his chains, his whole person but an image of death itself. To those torments of mind you must consider the sufferings of the body: a den of infection for a dwelling, measured portions of crude bread for food and straw for a bed.<sup>6</sup>

Louise's biographers and her writings furnish no details concerning her early visits to the galley slaves. The first indication we have of her personal service to those poor prisoners is taken from a letter which Saint Vincent addressed to her in 1632. He makes it quite clear that her devotion toward those poor prisoners had begun at an earlier period: "Charity toward those poor galley slaves is of incomparable merit before God. You have done well to assist them and you will do well to continue doing so in whatever way possible."<sup>7</sup>

Whether or not Louise was one of those very first visitors to the galley slaves, she remains worthy of our admiration and of our praise for what she accomplished for those poor unfortunate ones from this period on. She placed her Daughters in their service and stimulated the Ladies of Charity to visit them in a very close-knit collaboration with the sisters.

### *The Galley Slaves at La Tournelle*

The Saint Roch prison, wherein the galley slaves had been imprisoned since 1618, was in such a dilapidated condition that any possibility of repairs and improvements needed to guarantee the health of the prisoners had to be dismissed as futile. Furthermore, visits by "pious and charitable persons" in a very unorganized manner had led to great abuses. Women of ill repute had joined the group and "made of a place of suffering and grief an abode of prostitution and scandal."<sup>8</sup> Those disorders worried Vincent from whose thoughts the galley slaves were never absent. He wanted to remedy the situation but the prisons of Paris did not come under his jurisdiction. If he had already taken care of the galley slaves of Paris, it was at his own expense.

It is very probable that he strongly upheld the decisions made by the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, of which he was a member, when in 1630 it engaged in a vigorous struggle against the deplorable practices going on in those infected and badly aired dens, where criminals "rotted alive"<sup>9</sup> according to Count René de Voyer d'Argenson. The Company accomplished much good. At its own expense it hired four additional guards in



the last months of that year. The galley slaves were able to leave their dens for a few moments each day in order to breathe a little fresh air. Either at the instigation of the Company or on his own initiative, Vincent solicited and encouraged others to solicit King Louis XIII "to agree to converting the former tower standing between the Saint Bernard gate and the river into a shelter for those poor galley slaves. This request was granted to him in the year 1632, and the prisoners were taken there, where for several years they remained dependent upon the alms of charitable persons."<sup>10</sup>

In 1633, the Company of the Blessed Sacrament was forced to discontinue its ministry in the prisons of Paris because of objections set forth by some pastors who considered this interference "an insult to their pastoral dignity."<sup>11</sup> Religious assistance to the convicts fell by right to the parish priest. Father George Froger, pastor of the parish of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, addressed himself to the Archbishop to obtain on September 2, 1634, an authorization for religious services to be held in the tower of the galley slaves. A member of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament was chosen as chaplain, a task facilitated by the constant support of his confreres who ever favored help to the galley slaves. No one perhaps showed them as much interest as Vincent who wanted to assure them material, moral and religious assistance.

Spiritual help to prisoners was one of the obligations stipulated in the contract that gave birth to the Congregation of the Mission.<sup>12</sup> Vincent also appealed to the priests who attended the Tuesday conferences to preach missions to the convicts before their departure for the galleys in Marseilles. He felt that the poor men needed to be prepared for the reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist and for the strength to support in a Christian manner the hardships of the journey.

In highlighting Louise de Marillac's service to the galley slaves there is no intention of minimizing in any way the great amount of good that Vincent de Paul did for them. It was he who in 1632, requested of Louise, at that time Superioress of the Charity established in the parish of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, to include the galley slaves in the distribution of alms made to the poor of the parish by the Ladies of Charity of the Confraternity. "Consider for a moment," he wrote to her, "whether or not your Confraternity of Charity of Saint Nicolas might not wish to take charge of this for at least some time."<sup>13</sup> Louise and the Ladies gave as much as they could but their alms did not suffice, so an appeal had to be made to the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel Dieu. In their turn, they brought to these poor victims consolation and alms.



### *Vincent Suggested to Louise to Send Her Daughters to Serve the Galley Slaves*

Vincent had in mind a more effective and more lasting good. He turned to Mademoiselle Le Gras and closely observed her Daughters, who beneath their rustic manner concealed treasures of virtue and love. They had become a fervent little group ready to undertake any task for the Lord of Charity. Courageously, Vincent suggested to Louise to train them to become “servants of the galley slaves.” As a result, in 1640, these simple, humble and pure women began their service of the unfortunate prisoners at La Tournelle.

For eight years Louise had had numerous opportunities of studying at close range the intense physical and moral distress of the galley slaves. She had seen those poor unfortunate ones maltreated by brutal jailers eager for personal gain. She saw them obliged to buy their food at prices far higher than the ordinary prices, and she knew that they were deprived of all care. Her heart had become more and more touched, especially at the sight of the sick ones, to whom the administration only allotted the same portion of bread and water as the well received. Once again Divine Providence was training her at the school of experience. After having given herself personally to this work for a long time, she was qualified to organize *the service of the galley slaves*. Vincent was aware of this and he relied on her wisdom and common sense to put into practice what only his great love of God could have dreamed of.

### *1640: The Service of the Galley Slaves Begins*

January 1640: Louise was in Angers establishing her Daughters at the Saint-Jean hospital. Seven letters from Vincent reached her one right after the other. His great desire for her return to Paris repeated itself like a refrain. On January 17, he wrote to her: “Oh, how necessary is your presence here for the affairs of the Charity.”<sup>14</sup> Five days later he pleaded, “As for your return, I beg you that it might be as soon as possible.” To assure this he recommended that she “rent a carriage and two good, strong horses.”<sup>15</sup> His letter of February 10, revealed his unbounded joy at the thought that she would soon be back. “Blessed be God,” he wrote, “that you are returning so soon. Oh, how welcome you will be and with what

great desire we await you.”<sup>16</sup> That very day he was awaiting Mr. Cornwell’s daughter. Her father had willed “an income of six thousand *livres* for the good of the galley slaves, to be used in their assistance.”<sup>17</sup> There is almost a sigh a relief in his words of a few days later, “You will arrive just in time to settle the matter of the galley slaves.”

By the end of the month, Louise was finally back in Paris helping him settle several matters before the legacy destined for the galley slaves could be obtained. Vincent was forced to entreat the Procurator General Mathieu Molé to take action that funds sufficient enough to assure an income of six thousand *livres* might be placed in his hands and administered by him and his successors. It was that gift which would provide corporal relief for the galley slaves by devoted servants placed at their disposal.

Vincent had recognized as a difficult task the organization of the visits to the galley slaves. In 1632 he had suggested it to Louise with a reminder “that it is the very difficulty of the work which causes me to present this thought to your adventurous mind.”<sup>18</sup> How much more difficult was his appeal of 1640 for her to organize the service of the galley slaves.

### *Difficulties of the Task*

Louise must have shuttered, in spite of herself, at the very thought of placing untrained servants of the poor in the prison life of those infernal dens of the seventeenth century. She, who never went blindly into anything, must have considered this project under every possible aspect. Would the galley slaves refuse to respect uncouth and uneducated country girls? Would she be exposing her Daughters to imminent danger among those criminals? Louise’s zeal was not to be stopped by obstacles. Faced with a mission in which the poor were considered repugnant and greatly neglected, Louise could not hesitate. On the contrary, she rejoiced in having the occasion of sending her Daughters to take care of those poor unfortunate ones, convinced that God would guard them as He had protected the three young men in the fiery furnace, since it was out of charity and obedience that they were going there. That was her firm theory!

It is worth noting that it was at this period of history when Louise’s action in favor of the galley slaves was at its height, that the general adoption of the foundlings had just been inaugurated, that new Charities



were being formed, and that a new Motherhouse was being established. It was to the latter that each of her Daughters would come to be filled with the love of God and of the neighbor, and from where Louise's maternal interest would follow them to their fields of action, as she had so recently done for her good Daughters whom she accompanied to the Hôtel Dieu of Angers. Although her overburdened days left her few free moments, she felt she must find time for the new service destined to reach down to the lowest levels of human misery.

### *Firsthand Formation*

For other works, Louise had at times been able to rely on methods already established and could provide a formation by correspondence. Her general method of forming beginners by placing them with others in an established service or in collaboration with them did not apply here. The Daughters destined for the service of the galley slaves, where all was to be organized, would need an in-training formation. If she accepted the responsibility of sending her Daughters to such a place, she would point out to them in advance the dangers to which they would find themselves exposed and the precautions which they would have to take. She would not conceal in the slightest way the dangers of their corrupted surroundings. For lack of experienced workers in this employment, it seems most probable to us that Louise herself accompanied the first "Daughters of the galley slaves" to the prison of La Tournelle. There she would have seen the conditions in which they would be rendering service.

Knowing so well from her own formation that experience is the best guarantee against error, she doubtless spent some time there in order to watch them at work. Her presence at La Tournelle is further affirmed by a request from Vincent that she draw up the regulations for the Daughters of the galley slaves, adding: "But for that, it is good to know what they do there and to include it."<sup>19</sup> In order to know that, Louise must have gone there.

### *Louise Draws Up the Regulations*

The main idea which inspired all Louise's social action is evident in these regulations. In the first place she indicated the double end of the

new enterprise, "to serve *corporally and spiritually* the poor galley slaves who are detained in prison until they are conducted to the galleys, whether they are able-bodied or sick"<sup>20</sup> Before thinking of saving the soul of the galley slave, must not the sisters give them a life which will permit them to become conscious of having a soul? For that reason the corporal service with its concern for *food, clothing and the care of the sick* must occupy first place.

### *To Procure Good Food for the Galley Slaves*

The first abuse which Louise tried to correct was to substitute appetizing and well-prepared food for the poor allotment of food and water which was given to the prisoners. The humidity and the lack of cleanliness in the prison, not favoring its preparation, she prescribed that her sisters prepare "their food every day in their house, buying themselves the meat and other things required for their nourishment."<sup>21</sup>

Prescriptions full of delicacy on the part of Louise and well carried out by her Daughters! Was it not one of those Daughters who, according to the testimony of her companion in the service of the galley slaves, "arose around three o'clock in the morning in the summer, because meat could not be kept a long time, and went to the butcher's from where she would return laden with seventy-five *livres* of meat."<sup>22</sup>

To be able to prepare the food, it was necessary first of all to buy it. Its purchase by the sisters spared the galley slaves the worry of messengers who would deceive them as to the quality and quantity of the food which they brought. It also spared them the brutality of their guardians, who gave them repulsive food and undertook shameful speculations in the sale of food and other objects of necessity.<sup>23</sup> Louise gave the sisters an important recommendation in pointing out to them that the food was *the property of the poor*, therefore it was necessary to manage it well. The regulations would then state "not to take any of their food directly or indirectly and not to favor merchants who furnish it to the detriment of the said poor."<sup>24</sup>

Experience proved that the lesson was well understood. Meat becoming very rare, the sisters themselves renounced their portion in favor of the galley slaves "not to give them subject of complaint or of murmur."<sup>25</sup> The rule would also stress that "the ones who make the purchase will keep an account of the same in order to render an account, whenever necessary,



to those to whom it should be made.” How full of wisdom was this recommendation to poor country girls exposed to the danger which the handling of money ever presents. Saint Vincent, in his turn, would add: “It is very necessary for the Daughters of Charity to be upright and to appear so in their accounts.”<sup>26</sup>

Resources at their disposal were however very limited and often lacking. It was on those occasions that the Daughters showed themselves worthy of their spiritual mother. For “their Poor” they did not hesitate to beg from charitable persons. Unfortunately, days were to come, even entire years, during which the latter were not able to contribute the desired alms, for the wealthy and the most powerful themselves had difficulty in subsisting even to save their lives.<sup>27</sup> Miracles of economy were necessary for the sisters to be able to feed the galley slaves. A letter addressed to Vincent during the war of the *Fronde* gives evidence of this. With what solicitude his co-worker expressed therein her anxiety for their voluntary beggar who no longer had resources for her poor prisoners. “Our sister in the service of the galley slaves,” she wrote, “came to me yesterday all upset because she no longer had bread for her poor, both because of what is due to the baker as for the high price of bread. She has been borrowing and begging everywhere for that purpose but with great difficulty.”<sup>28</sup>

Once the food was bought, it was necessary to prepare it with care and in such a way as to make it appetizing. Louise’s advice to each sister placed on duty in the kitchen was “that the meat be well cooked, neither overdone nor rare.”<sup>29</sup> But if the quality and quantity of meat was very necessary to better the state of health of the poor galley slaves, weakened by their life of inactivity at La Tournelle, punctuality seemed even more essential to Louise in order to satisfy those poor prisoners. It was thus that the sisters were required to take the kettle to them “at the exact hour.” True service had begun for the “Daughters of the galley slaves” but in what a place! Louise’s maternal concern could not conceal itself.

### *To Treat the Galley Slaves with Respect and Mildness*

She acquainted the sisters with the surroundings in which they would be placed. Those men of filth and mire, to borrow the language of the century, would be receiving services which they should be rendering themselves. Therefore, they would not receive them with good grace and would doubtless tell the sisters that they were their servants and that it



was they who enabled them to earn a living. Often they would treat them as vile servants. However, inspired wisdom would dematerialize, so to speak, that infected milieu for in spite of their blasphemies and crude language, in spite of their uncleanness, in spite of all their ugliness, the galley slaves “were nonetheless members of the One who had become a slave.”<sup>30</sup> Louise would tell the sisters:

You are doing very little by carrying kettles, if you do not propose to yourselves Jesus Christ as the object of your ministry. Should we forget in the slightest way that the poor are the members of Jesus Christ, we will inevitably lose some of the love and sweetness which we must ever have for our dear masters. On the contrary, this thought will enable us to have no trouble in serving and respecting them, in relieving them, and in never complaining of them.<sup>31</sup>

Thanks to the lessons which they received from their virtuous foundress, the sisters understood the importance of “never speaking to them rudely or of reproaching them for their disagreeableness.”<sup>32</sup> They even went further and redoubled their attention and kindness toward those who maltreated them the most. One among them, Barbara Angiboust, was outstanding for her great charity and unalterable patience. Sometimes the galley slaves were displeased with what they were served and would become angry with her to such a point that they would throw both the soup and the meat on the ground, yelling at her whatever impatience suggested to them. According to the report of Jeanne Luce, who helped her in this service, “Barbara suffered all this without uttering a word. She would pick up the food, clean it, and give it once again to the galley slaves, showing as kindly an expression as if they had neither done nor said anything.”<sup>33</sup>

### *Dealings with Guards*

The regulations stated also that “if the kettle should be too heavy, they should get assistance from the guards.” Another contact, another danger! Louise was ever on the watch. Many were her prudent advices to the sisters concerning all their dealings with the guards. Louise, as a mother, watched jealously over the purity of her Daughters, who must never let the guards “enter their rooms except at the hour when they shall come to fetch the kettle.”<sup>34</sup> On those occasions the sisters were not to separate



themselves from each other. This union was necessary because there were only two of them placed at La Tournelle except in the year 1642, epoch at which Louise sent a third sister to help Sister Barbara who had become weak and sickly.<sup>35</sup> Louise foresaw that if the guards "had a need of speaking to them at any other time, it would be at the door located at the foot of the steps." Otherwise, she warned the sisters "not to have any contact with the guards of the galley slaves."

Louise showed the prudence of a mother who is on the alert to preserve the purity of her children but also the wisdom of a legislator who aims at avoiding any action which might destroy the work! She feared especially the infiltration of favor, the downfall of so many good works. There was to be no kind of conspiracy between the sisters and the guards, who also had laws to obey. The established law at the prison must be observed at any cost. Furthermore, Louise reasoned that if the sisters were prudent and patient in their dealings with the guards, the latter would feel obliged to treat the convicts less harshly. Their personal conduct was to be a powerful influence for good. It was thus that Sister Barbara "on five or six occasions was able to prevent the guards from striking prisoners."<sup>36</sup> When the sisters' charity did not effect the desired result, they did not hesitate to follow the example of Sister Farre of Saint-Roch who "would fall on her knees in front of the convicts in order to spare them from receiving the blows."<sup>37</sup>

### *Well-Regulated Charity*

Louise ever encouraged the charity of her Daughters but showed them that it must nevertheless be well regulated. On one occasion, for example, she made one of the sisters understand that she had done wrong for an apparent good. She had lessened the portion of some of the galley slaves so that others might be provided for, without having previously notified the Administrator,<sup>38</sup> who saw in this action an interference in his powers and who threatened to dismiss the sisters. For the few extra prisoners the sister might have helped, the sisters might have had to abandon the greater number. Would that have been true charity? No, according to Louise who was trained by Saint Vincent to understand that "Our Lord wishes us to serve him with judgment; all else is indiscreet zeal."<sup>39</sup>

For that same reason she would remind the sisters that they were at the Tournelle Prison for the relief of the misery they found there, not to

establish regulations, which depended on the administrators. They were not to interfere in the slightest way even by delivering a letter or accepting any errand whatsoever from the convicts without proper authorization.<sup>40</sup> They were their servants, yes, but must ever be mindful to respect the decisions of authority.

How much wisdom Louise manifested in her analysis of a request made by the Duchess d'Aiguillon that one of the sisters draw up for her a list of the galley slaves who should be freed. Louise felt this to be the responsibility of the administration. She immediately pointed out three serious difficulties she could foresee:

"First, the sister can only glean her information from the prisoners' manner of acting toward her, whether they bestowed insults or praise upon her. This being the case, she might commit an injustice.

"Another difficulty is that some prisoners offer money to their captain and to the concierge, who will then blame the sister for being the cause of their misfortune.

"The third difficulty is that those who must remain will believe that the sister is responsible for their condition. You know what such people can both say and do."<sup>41</sup>

Louise, who would have wished all to share in this benefit, thus communicated her thoughts to Vincent. She assured him that she had asked the sister "to delay drawing up the list until I should hear from you." Documents do not disclose Vincent's reply, but the continuation of the work makes one conclude that he agreed wholeheartedly with his collaborator in maintaining a distinction between "a charitable work" and a "responsibility of the police."

### *Sanitary Reforms*

Vincent agreed also with her suggestions for sanitary reforms which she deemed necessary day by day on her visits to the prison. She was convinced that relief without hygienic care threatened to run into great difficulties. That is a very natural consideration for our century, in which hygienic concern plays such an important role, but Louise belonged to the seventeenth century! What endeavors she exerted to establish cleanliness everywhere! How carefully she watched to make sure that the clothing of the prisoners should be clean!

When they arrived, it was Louise's Daughters who would remove their



soiled and tattered shirts to replace them with clean ones. The sisters were also reminded by their rule to take great care "to give the convicts clean clothes every Saturday and to wash the soiled ones." That service, though repugnant to nature, was for them a corporal work of mercy greatly appreciated by God. That same service was to be repeated "when the chain gang was ready to set out" so that the convicts might have "clean shirts and other clothes" for the length of the voyage.

That delicate task, which Louise asked her Daughters to perform, remained throughout her life one of the services which in spite of her numerous occupations, she loved most to render whenever the occasion presented itself. One of the first sisters testified that sometimes "poor discharged prisoners who were wearing rotted shirts on their back and whose legs were eaten away" would come to the sisters' house. Louise would "give them some of her son's shirts and socks, instruct them and give them an alms."<sup>42</sup> Another sister, who witnessed her performing similar services to prisoners, added that Louise "would wash their feet, treat their sores, and give them some of her son's clothing."<sup>43</sup>

Louise showed the same concern for order, economy and cleanliness in every detail dealing with material care. Far in advance of her century, she was well aware of the close bond which exists between morality and hygiene.

The sisters were constantly reminded to air and clean the convicts' cells at the departure of the chain gang. At that time their work increased considerably because theirs was the task of "emptying and refilling straw mattresses and cleaning the cells."<sup>44</sup> Sometimes, in spite of their precautions, other galley slaves arrived before the work of cleaning was finished. At those times, the Sisters gladly gave up their own mattresses so that their "Lords and Masters" might be provided for.<sup>45</sup>

Louise's recommendations as to the manner of approaching the galley slaves, of caring for them and of showing interest in their spiritual welfare were characterized by the most tender charity, for to Louise and her Daughters corporal assistance was but a means. Spiritual help was the end. In this respect they conformed to the charitable motivation of the century, which was "essentially religious" in its endeavor "to lead back or to preserve souls in the faith."<sup>46</sup> Therein, contrary to Mr. Cohen's viewpoint, there was a great concern for saving the body as well as selfless spiritual service on the part of generous souls.

Considering the sick prisoners more abandoned than all others, she urged the sisters to show them "even greater care than the sick of the



parishes." Visits, medications, better prepared food, special broths, nothing was too good for them.

All in the sisters' daily routine was to be subordinated to the service they rendered those poor creatures. The lesson of "leaving God for God" whenever necessary was constantly instilled in the sisters. Louise ever came back to it in their formation. One of the sisters was especially outstanding in this holy practice. Her companion described her as being very devout "but her devotion was not misdirected—of all her devotions she preferred the service she was obliged to render to the poor."<sup>47</sup>

It was in rendering countless services to the sick that the sisters were encouraged "to urge them to lead a good life in the future" and to inquire discreetly into their dispositions for making the Mission.

### *Collaboration with the Ladies of Charity*

Directed by a keen psychological sense, Louise understood that two overburdened sisters could not assure the convicts the spiritual assistance they would have liked to give. Why not solicit collaboration of the Ladies of Charity whom she had personally initiated in visiting the galley slaves? Louise felt that their presence at meal time would not only be of spiritual help but would also lighten the corporal service of the Daughters. Their social rank, an important factor in the seventeenth century, would oblige the convicts to show greater respect while they were present. Thus considered, the ninth article of the regulations would read:

Since experience has given proof that the presence of some Ladies of Charity has been a great means of ensuring the respect of the convicts, they will endeavor discreetly to see that some come occasionally at the hour of the meals. . .<sup>48</sup>

Because the Ladies failed at times in regularity and exactitude in those visits, Louise chose the day of a large assembly of the Ladies of Charity to ask Vincent to remind them of the "great spiritual good they might accomplish in visiting the galley slaves when our sisters bring them their dinner, which is an hour convenient enough for them to be back home in time to take care of their household duties. They are served at ten o'clock."<sup>49</sup>

Once again love was to bring to the same level classes of society otherwise quite far apart. It was in the service of abandoned convicts that the Ladies of nobility of the seventeenth century and those of the bourgeois class were to associate with village girls.



### *To Choose Carefully the Sisters to Serve the Convicts*

The Superior's task didn't limit itself to placing her Daughters at the Tournelle Prison. Once there they were to keep her posted so that she might continue directing the work. To encourage her Daughters to take good resolutions was one thing but it was another matter to see that they were carried out. Their devotedness in caring for the convicts demanded virtues not easily lost by contact with criminals.

Thus, the choice of sisters for this work was a delicate one. Vincent and Louise combined efforts. A few months after they had been sent there Vincent sent Louise a word of warning concerning "Sister Jeanne in her service of the galley slaves. . . It seems most necessary to change her just as soon as possible. . ." <sup>50</sup> Again at the Community Council of October 25, 1646, a similar problem concerning sisters placed in the prisons was discussed.

However, these were exceptions. The devotedness of the sisters placed in the service of those poor derelicts was truly heroic. One among them never failed at the departure of the chain gang "to give to each poor galley slave one or two *écus*, which she had begged for them from charitable persons." <sup>51</sup> She had truly adopted them and followed them with a mother's solicitude.

### *Not to be Discouraged*

The very nature of the work led the sisters engaged in this work to be easily discouraged. It was on those occasions that Vincent would show them how the basest employments in the opinion of the world were great in the light of faith.

"Who had pity on poor criminals abandoned by everyone?" he asked them in 1655. "Poor Daughters of Charity! Is that not to do what we have already said: to honor the great charity of Our Lord, who helped the most miserable of sinners without considering their crimes?" <sup>52</sup>

The Daughters would draw from his words the strength needed not to become discouraged. Louise, for her part, would point out to them the inestimable grace which God had bestowed on them when He chose them to be the servants of convicts, and she would encourage them to "renew themselves in the spirit of purity and modesty" so necessary in their

employment, in order to be “like the sunlight which shines constantly on filth without becoming tainted in the least.”<sup>53</sup>

Obliged to absent herself from Paris in 1646, Louise named her Assistant Sister Elizabeth Hellot to visit the sisters in the service of the galley slaves every eight or ten days.<sup>54</sup> In that manner, she assured a follow-up of the formation she had personally given to the “Daughters of the Galley Slaves.” In fact, she always showed a special predilection for this work. Once while visiting the Procurator General, she had the delicacy to thank him very specially for the kindness he always showed our sisters when they appealed to him in their needs for “the poor galley slaves as well as the foundlings.”<sup>55</sup>

### *Since Then?*

La Tournelle remained a prison until 1790. But for more than a century the field of action of the Daughters of the Galley Slaves had been spreading. Until 1660, the Ladies of Charity had only cared for the galley slaves in Paris. At that time they were encouraged to help the unfortunate convicts of other prisons, and the Daughters of Charity accompanied them. Until the Revolution, the Ladies of Charity kept two Daughters in service at the Conciergerie to prepare broth for the sick and remedies needed by prisoners.<sup>56</sup>

Work in the prisons, the modified form of that of the galley slaves, was becoming stabilized. To be trained properly, “the servants of the prisoners” of the eighteenth century drew inspiration from the same regulations drawn up so prudently by Louise for the first sisters placed in the service of the convicts of the Tournelle prison.

Among those, Sister Marie Gulhès of Rennes, has often been cited for the example she gave. For her the first care to be given to the prisoners was “to clean them of filth.” After changing their clothing, she would provide for them all the relief their condition required. Thus occupied, she would speak to them of their crimes and try to prepare them for death, when she foresaw no possibility of preventing this. And, like Barbara Angiboust, she always showed a smiling countenance to those convicts who “were cruel enough to maltreat her in a brutal manner.”<sup>57</sup>

Had Louise foreseen to what heroism her Daughters would be led in their endeavors to observe faithfully her recommendations? Faithful to that eighth article of the rules: “Nor will they reply in order to justify



themselves when falsely accused," one of the Daughters of the nineteenth century verified to the letter the words of Saint Paul: "Remember those who are in chains as if you yourself were in chains with them."<sup>58</sup> After having devoted herself with great charity to prisoners for forty-one years, she was obliged to spend a year in prison because of her faith. "This did not hinder her from continuing to obtain spiritual help for innocent victims condemned to death in spite of the dangers to which she was exposing herself in so acting."<sup>59</sup>

This field of action soon spread beyond France. Prisoners of other countries were to profit by the devoted service of the Daughters of Charity. In the United States, the slaves—other galley slaves—were to know charitable servants. One of them seeing those poor Negroes "treated like beasts of burden obtained a lessening of brutality on the part of the guards."<sup>60</sup>

Other Barbaras—other Nicoles—other "Servants of convicts." Each century and each nation claimed them. Those of the twentieth century still enroll in the school of their foundress. Her advice guides them in their undertakings and preserves them from contamination in their frequent visits to dangerous surroundings.

Moral assistance of prisoners has replaced corporal assistance since governments, understanding their duty, have procured the necessaries of life for the inmates. Since then, the Daughters of Louise, ever faithful to adapting their action to the needs of the century, direct their efforts more toward moral relief.

The following report from the Ministry of Prisons in Cuba indicates a current trend:

Each Thursday two sisters go to the Central House of Detention. On arrival each one goes to her section as two large assembly halls have been placed at their disposal. There the prisoners, who wish to do so, gather to listen to them. Each sister has an audience of 150 to 200 men each time. No jailer is in the hall. It was decided that after the sister had talked, if any point needed to be made clearer, the questions would be asked in the yard. There, too, they enjoy perfect liberty. The two sisters are then together, and prisoners who wish to do so approach them one after the other without being prevented by their jailers.

This is a means of becoming better acquainted with each one, and from religious topics the conversation passes to family matters or vice versa. They know that the Daughters of Charity are at their service and also at the service of their dear ones. . . .<sup>61</sup>

All the good that can still be said of the Daughters of Charity placed in the service of prisoners only increases the praise and glory of their Spiritual Mother!



## Chapter 5

### ***THE ISOLATION OF ELDERLY PEOPLE***

*The aim you must have in view, is to honor Our Lord Jesus Christ, serving Him in the needy poor as you did when assisting the poor war refugees who came fleeing to Paris, and the poor of the HOLY NAME OF JESUS.*  
*Saint Vincent de Paul*

#### *Beggars in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

As early as the sixteenth century, the increase of misery and the indifference manifested in works of charity had keenly preoccupied people.

With various shades of difference, everyone desired the repression of wandering beggars, the punishment of the pseudo-poor and a rational organization of welfare under the direction and control of municipal authority. The truly poor were to be encouraged to work while the handicapped were to be helped. As for strangers, it was customary to chase them from the city.<sup>1</sup> For the principal purpose of struggling against the terrible scourge of mendicity the Grand Bureau of the Poor was founded.<sup>2</sup>

However, the general disorganization, an aftermath of the religious wars, was for a long time a hindrance to the re-establishment of public prosperity. This struggle against mendicity remained a concern and a problem for the following century, so much so that at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIII, the thought of "enclosing the poor" still haunted the people. A life of insecurity and of perpetual alarm only increased the number of vagabonds.

#### *Police Regulations*

In 1611, the statutes of hospitals for enclosed poor people were drawn up. These specified the allocation of necessary food and the organization

of appropriate work according to sex and age.<sup>3</sup> For some time these measures produced marvels but once the first feeling of fear had fallen, the beggars ventured forth once again into the streets of the city. Severe sanctions were soon proclaimed; whipping, neck chains and the galleys for men; whipping and the shaving of the head for women. Once again, fear restrained the beggars for about four years. At the beginning of the year 1617, they were back again in the streets. A pamphlet published that year speaks of them in the following manner:

Hospitals are filled with poor people, most of them soldiers, black lackeys, peasants, men and women beggars so much so that it is not possible to speak of any business or even to say a *Pater Noster* without three or four interruptions. They are blaspheming the name of God, uttering outrageous and harmful words and the people are murmuring strangely about the great number of those people. On seeing alms boxes for the enclosed or for the blind and others, people say that these are lies assuming the form of compassion and that there really are no longer any enclosed.<sup>4</sup>

Two years later a decree of the Court of Parliament dated November 29, 1619, attempted to remedy this by ordering the enclosure of the poor in a house called the Petit-Bourbon, situated in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques.<sup>5</sup> A decree of 1622 also refers to a house of the Faubourg Saint-Marcel, destined for the enclosure of the poor:

Considered by the Court was the request presented by the Procurator General of the King that to make up for a part of the expense for the rent of five hospitals for enclosed poor numbering 1,300 or 1,400, there has been proposed the purchase of a house situated in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel.<sup>6</sup>

In 1629 and again in 1630, Parliament recalled its prohibition of former years but beggars were too fond of their liberty and of their idleness to heed the warning.

Good will certainly was not lacking in those who tried to solve the problem of mendicity, for a new decree of the Court of Parliament dated July 16, 1632, proclaimed the establishment "of a general hospital in which poor of all conditions might be conveniently lodged."<sup>7</sup> Whether the preamble of these ordinances referred to charity or to good order, the conclusion was ever the same, "beggars constitute a social danger. They must be enclosed."<sup>8</sup>

While these projects failed to be carried out, the number of beggars



during the week, they received nothing. To poor strangers in Mâcon lodging was given for one night. On the morrow, they were sent away after having received two *sols*.

To provide the necessary funds for this good work, the rich pledged themselves in writing to give each year wheat, wine, meat, wood, and clothing. According to the testimony of Father Desmoulins, Superior of the Oratory at Mâcon, "Vincent knew so well how to manage both the great and the lowly that each one willingly contributed to such a good work, some in money, others in wheat or in other food products, according to their possibilities in such a way that more than 300 poor people were lodged, fed and provided for quite reasonably. Vincent contributed the first alms himself and then withdrew."<sup>14</sup>

### *In Paris*

It was thus that Saint Vincent de Paul had happily solved the problem of mendicity in Mâcon in 1621. But in Paris, the situation was quite different and the remedy much more difficult to discover. He turned then toward his co-worker, and according to their little means, Monsieur Vincent and Mademoiselle LeGras sought a solution to suppress mendicity in the city, which would certainly be a means of making themselves useful to the poor. Their attempt, simple as it was, was to end in the founding of the Hospice of the Holy Name of Jesus, which would serve as a home for poor workmen whom old age or infirmity prevented from earning their livelihood.

The biographers of Saint Vincent de Paul give for the most part the principal details of the establishment of this work which was made possible, thanks to the generosity of a bourgeois of Paris. Feeling interiorly disposed to serve God in the person of the poor, this citizen of Paris brought a sum of one hundred thousand livres to Vincent for a good work for which he left the choice to him. These authors point out, among other facts, the purchase of a house of The Holy Name of Jesus in the Faubourg Saint Laurent, acquired by the Congregation of the Mission on September 28, 1647. It was to be used according to the conditions of the contract, "to house, feed and clothe forty persons of both sexes and to teach them the things necessary for salvation, to make them live in the fear of God and His love, and also to occupy them in some work, thus causing them to avoid begging and idleness which are the mother of all vices."<sup>15</sup>

Likewise quoted is the approbation given to the work by His Excellency, the Archbishop of Paris, on March 16, 1654, and that of the king in the month of November of the same year. His Majesty recognized this new Hospice dedicated, as it were, to God. For that reason he freed it from all taxes on food, "in exchange for which, the poor therein should recite every day of the week the *Exaudiat* for our prosperity and that of our successors, as well as for preservation and peace in our state."<sup>16</sup> 1653 is the date given unanimously for the opening of the hospice which received and lodged forty poor workmen, twenty of each sex, in two separate buildings separated from each other but so well arranged that both men and women assembled in the same Chapel to hear Mass without either seeing one another or speaking to one another.

### *Louise de Marillac Organizes the Hospice of the Holy Name of Jesus*

The important role played in this enterprise by Louise de Marillac is almost completely neglected by those biographers. It is especially by showing the action of Louise in this work, that we should like to point out once again her practical common sense and organizing genius as well as her supernatural spirit which, while desiring to bring a purely human solution to the misery of poor old people worthy of care, ever took into account in the first place the state of their soul. It is in this matter especially that her manner of looking at things like that of Saint Vincent differed essentially from that of the state.

### *Not Force but Service*

The idea of forced labor and of enclosure as a punishment for incorrigible beggars had already failed in previous attempts of the government. According to Paultre, enclosure as a punishment for incorrigible beggars was characteristic of the century.<sup>17</sup> It was repugnant to Vincent and Louise who were especially conscious of the liberty of the poor, and respected their dignity. Work to them was an excellent means of reaction against solitude and loneliness which are the great suffering of old age. In order to reduce this moral suffering and to lighten their impression of being



useless and powerless, Monsieur Vincent and "Mademoiselle" foresaw on their part a voluntary work of such a nature as to keep the aged busy, "according to their strength and ability in order to avoid idleness."<sup>18</sup>

To organize and to carry out the work, the holy priest turned as ever to his faithful collaborator for advice. He had considered the matter before God; she did likewise.

### *Supernatural View at the Basis of the Work*

Providence had manifested its wishes by means of the donation of a rich citizen of Paris. Again God was consulted upon the aim to be attained and the means to be employed. A note written by Saint Louise and preserved in the Archives of the Rue du Bac throws light on the subject:

As I wanted to consider that work before God, it occurred to me to look at it from all angles; its beginning, its continuation and its end.<sup>19</sup>

Seeing the work "inspired by God" and not according to man's designs, she found its end excellent "because it pertained to the glory of God by the carrying out of His Holy Will, since man was ordered to earn his bread by working," and she entrusted it entirely to Him and then recommended it to the prayers of her Daughters "so that His Holy Will might be accomplished."<sup>20</sup>

### *The Work is Organized*

Ever concerned about the human person, Louise foresaw the double advantage, namely the moral and material one, which the good use of their time would bring to the hospitalized. Working according to their physical strength, they would not feel useless to society and, at the same time would help provide for their maintenance. The question therefore was to find them occupations suited to their ability and which would also bring in some income, such as: weaving and shoemaking for the men, and glove-making and lingerie for the women.<sup>21</sup>

Whether these old people were themselves experts in these trades, or whether they were taught them, the fact is that already long before our century, we see the work of re-education initiated. To make it as success-

ful as possible, Louise did not hesitate to make an appeal to the most skillful artisans of the time, begging them to condescend through charity to spend six months among their unfortunate aged brethren to teach them, pretending that they too were poor inmates. In other cases, they were not asked to contribute their services as charity but they were engaged as a group of salaried instructors.

Saint Louise did not stint in anything. "Having secured a fairly good number of artisans to set the work on foot and keep it going, we must not be stopped by the cost necessary for purchasing the tools and materials nor by the difficulties of finding advantageous dealers. Divine Providence will not fail us in anything."<sup>22</sup>

To know how to keep elderly people occupied is really the sovereign remedy to moral suffering so keenly felt by some of them. Louise remarked that the good resulting from the work, "for the spiritual as well as for the temporal benefits will depend upon the fact that no one will be useless especially in the beginning."<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the twentieth century, at the seventh Congress of Hospitals held in 1951, Professor Pierre Delore, when giving his report on "The Hospital Problems of the Sick and the Aged" pointed out as an excellent innovation that "at the request of the elderly, social assistance could provide some employment suited to their capacities and find a market for these little projects made by them."<sup>24</sup>

### *Choice of the Hospitalized Persons*

Saint Louise attached great importance to this, especially in the beginning, in order to succeed in creating that atmosphere of peaceful serenity in which she wished to establish those elderly poor persons.

As this work is a great one, she wrote, it is important to establish it on good and solid foundations, in order to make it as perfect as possible and of lasting duration. Therefore, it seemed to me that the persons chosen for it should be upright and not exactly beggars.<sup>25</sup> It would seem appropriate that, once the selection is made, those persons should be made to understand the importance of the resolution they have taken.<sup>26</sup>

These persons must be free to come of their own accord, and not be compelled to do so. They must be individuals who have nobody, for if they have a family, the duty of caring for them is incumbent on its



members. Under the plea of charity, it would not truly be the proper thing to isolate them from family life.

In order to facilitate the choice, she suggested that charitable persons should be present to see those who would present themselves, to help judge their selection and to obtain "sufficient information about their lives and morals."<sup>27</sup> Once again Louise anticipated our modern methods of social investigation as well as the need of administrative advisory boards responsible for admissions and dismissals.

The Administrative Council naturally included Vincent and two citizens chosen by him: in the beginning, a Councillor of the King, auditor in his accounting office, and a dry goods dealer of Paris. Good judgment was shown in that selection: a lawyer and a merchant would insure the right management!

### *Financing of the Project*

Saint Louise, whose life belonged entirely to God, was also a very practical woman and had plans for establishing the new enterprise on a solid basis.

"The Daughters of Charity must be good accountants"<sup>28</sup> was one of the recommendations of Saint Vincent, and Louise was the very first to set the example in this. The Archives of the Rue du Bac preserve in Louise's firm handwriting the "register of the expenses incurred for those poor working people of the Holy Name of Jesus." It was begun in the year 1653: "ordinary expenses, extraordinary expenses," everything was recorded exactly. . .<sup>29</sup> What precision and concern about justice in giving to each one what was due to him!

Nothing was neglected so that the price paid the working people might be "the just price." She herself wrote to Saint Vincent to that effect:

Request the person who takes the trouble to have the goods fulled, to tell you what price the working men of her district receive for the fulling of serge; what they receive for carding and combing the wool; what they receive for spinning it, both on the large and on the small spinning wheels. This will facilitate the accounting with the working people, because the prices of Paris are too high, and because everything there costs so much more.<sup>30</sup>

Then follows a remark full of wisdom and experience: Each worker was to receive one-fourth of the price agreed upon for his work, from which a deduction would be made for the amount of wine he had drunk.

Thus, John Guesnet saw his earnings decreased by nearly five *livres* for his wine; John de Lestre, instead of receiving his nine *livres*, eight *sols*, only got six *livres*, fifteen *sols*. John Ollier who had made 118 yards of goods at the price of four *sols* a yard could not get any of his salary because he had spent more on wine than he had earned! The women were better managers of their earnings.

All these details are in the handwriting of Louise. Is it not an encouragement for those who have to balance accounts today? Louise knew how to foresee, combine and compute: she would have been able to justify, in case of an inspection, how each person required 165 *livres* a year. In one of her letters to Sister Barbara Angiboust, she inquired as to the best time to "take in her provision of flax strands for spinning, of which four to five hundred pounds were needed, whether it could be purchased at a good bargain and whether the cost of transportation could be kept low."<sup>31</sup> In those humble household concerns Louise knew how to show her effective love of God served in the Poor.

### *The "Family Atmosphere"*

The first old people admitted, twenty men and twenty women, entered in March 1652. "The little family," Saint Louise wrote to Saint Vincent "did not fail to assemble except for one of each sex who had not yet arrived. But I think, Father, that it will be necessary that you take the trouble of coming tomorrow morning to establish them and have them participate in some devotion, such as venerating the Holy Cross with some talk on the Passion."<sup>32</sup>

It is to be noted that the wishes of the founder had not stopped merely at material assistance. That good citizen had said to Saint Vincent: "Father, it is not merely to relieve misery that I give my property to the poor for their upkeep; my desire is moreover, that they be instructed and taught the things necessary for their salvation."<sup>33</sup> On October 29, 1653, after several months of trial, that intention was written in the contract signed by the benefactor and Vincent. A Priest of the Mission was to be in charge of the religious service. Louise, who always looked ahead, was careful to notify the Reverend Pastor of Saint-Laurent about that arrangement "so that he may have no reason for complaint."<sup>34</sup> Once again Louise manifested wisdom in forestalling possible conflicts, by consideration of the justified claims of every one.



Saint Vincent wished to give the first talk himself. What a model of psychology and of the most tender charity that informal talk was! After saying the rosary together, Saint Vincent began:

My children, I think it would be pleasing to God if we had a little talk about Christian doctrine and so I am going to ask you questions about the principal mysteries of Faith and about the sign of the cross. But you must not be surprised if you do not know how to make it well. Oh! no, my children, but you must do your best to learn well.<sup>35</sup>

He had no public humiliations for these unfortunate ones but only encouragements:

I am going to begin to question you, but if you cannot answer very well, don't get disturbed for that matter. I am going to ask you whether you know how to make the Sign of the Cross properly and should it be that you do not know how to bless yourself, don't feel bad about it. You are not the only ones. How many there are at court, perhaps even presidents, who do not know how to bless themselves.

To be compared to presidents, what an honor—even in the sharing of ignorance!

One after the other blessed himself, and when it was necessary, Vincent corrected the awkward or incomplete gesture.

Then, he began to speak of the principal Mysteries. Well aware how fond old people are of children, he selected a little boy to bring back to these memories rusted by time, the lessons of their youth: tactful charity of his! The good old people eagerly listened to that little fellow answering Saint Vincent:

“Who is God, my child?”

“Father, He is the Creator of heaven and earth and Lord of all things.”

“Fine, that's a good answer: He is the Creator of heaven and earth. What do you understand by these words: Creator of heaven and of earth?”

“I understand that it is He Who made all things.”

After this Saint Vincent developed these truths in his simple and lively manner:

Yes, when we say ‘Creator of heaven and earth’ we mean The One who made everything. You must remember that, my children. When you hear it said, you will remember that Creator means the same as saying The One who made everything. But you may say: ‘Has God made everything that is on the earth?’

Yes, He has made all. 'But, Father, has God made all the different creatures we see?' He has made all that for the service of man. There isn't the tiniest creature that He hasn't made, even the smallest of insects.<sup>36</sup>

He did not grow tired repeating and having them repeat, always in his kindly way, stimulating if necessary by some little praise. All the while he would be explaining very precisely the doctrine. Then came the turn of one of the elderly:

"Who is God?"

"He is the Creator of heaven and earth," she answered.

"What does Creator mean? What does creating something mean?"

"It means making something out of nothing."

"Oh! you are very smart, my dear—"

Vincent would then draw practical conclusions: since God has made all things, then it is from Him that you who live at the "NAME OF JESUS" have received all that you have. How many people would consider themselves happy if they had the fare which you enjoy.

How many poor field laborers, who work from morning to evening, are not so well fed as you are! And this should cause you to work with your hands as long as you can do so according to your strength, very far from thinking: 'I don't have to worry about doing anything, since I am assured that I shall want for nothing.' Ah! my children, you must beware of thinking thus and rather consider that you must work for the love of God, since He Himself gives you that example, working unceasingly for us.<sup>37</sup>

Thus encouraged and assisted even without realizing it, these hospitalized elderly people really enjoyed "the peace of eventide," and the thought of Louise that "God had designs upon this beginning" was being verified. "Murmuring and detraction," so Abelly mentions, "were banished together with other vices. The poor attended to their little occupations and to the religious duties applicable to their condition."<sup>38</sup> The desire of the Founder was well respected, according to the exact terms of the contract:

"To house, feed, clothe forty persons of both sexes and teach them the things necessary to salvation, endeavoring to make them live in the fear of God and in His love, as also to keep them occupied at some work and thus combat begging and idleness which are the mothers of all vices."

Provided with the looms and tools, the hospitalized were able to work according to their strength and their abilities. Owing to the wisdom of the



regulations, the presence of the sisters, and the good organization established by Louise, joy, peace, union, and order reigned in the Hospice, so much so, that there was a long waiting list of those who longed to be admitted. Priority was given to the relatives of the Priests of the Mission and of the sisters. Only two months after the installation of the first inmates, Saint Louise wrote to Sister Cecile Angiboust, requesting her to tell Sister Elizabeth that "her cousin Brocard passed away in a most Christian manner. Vincent saw him two or three times during his illness because we put him in a hospital for working people, which has been started in this district."<sup>39</sup> Some years later, it was Vincent who notified Father Tholard, C.M., that his "good sister is at the NAME OF JESUS with the aunt of Father Gorlidot."<sup>40</sup>

These details of charity from the life of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise bear witness to the fact that in the very first stages of the Company, the founders knew how to share tactfully the family interests of their sons and daughters, alleviating them when they could do so.

### *Extension of the Work*

The good repute of the Hospice of the Holy Name of Jesus not only drew "Clients" but it also encouraged the establishment of similar hospices.

The Ladies of Charity had come frequently to the establishment, where the sight of forty old people living in union and peace offered a striking contrast to the disorganized crowd of mendicants filling Paris and proving to be such a shame and such a danger in the kingdom. The Ladies wondered if Vincent and Louise couldn't undertake a hospice of the Holy Name of Jesus on a large scale where they might lodge all the poor people of Paris and then the poor of the kingdom. Before broaching the matter to Vincent, they consulted his collaborator.

In reply to their question as to whether or not women alone might undertake such a project, Louise gave them a clear-sighted reply filled with wisdom:

If this work is considered political, it seems that men should be the ones to undertake it, but if it is to be considered a work of charity, women may undertake it in the same manner in which they have undertaken the other great and painful exercises of charity which God has approved by the blessings He has placed on them.<sup>41</sup>

At first glance she saw the work under its double aspect of "politics" and of "charity." With remarkable foresight, she stated the conditions by which the work might be undertaken by the Ladies of Charity and still remain within the scope of work which formed the aim of their association. She then listed the conditions to which they must submit themselves to make their action useful and fruitful:

That the women should undertake it alone, it seems that that should not be. It would seem preferable that some devout men, whether members of a company or individuals, might be their helpers, to give advice and to take action in judiciary proceedings, which might be necessary to maintain all these different types of people in their duty on account of the diversity of minds, customs and dispositions.<sup>42</sup>

Louise already foresaw the difficulties which they would have to overcome as time went on. The eagerness and the determination of the ladies who wished to precipitate everything did not suit either Louise or Vincent, for whom "the works of God are carried out little by little and almost imperceptibly."<sup>43</sup> Although it was he who asked Queen Anne of Austria for the house and the enclosure of the Salpêtrière for the work to be undertaken, he carried out his plans too slowly to satisfy the ladies who could not understand his apprehension and his delay. While they became impatient with his indecision, he was deploring their thoughtless ardor and he exhorted them to moderate their zeal.

"We now have a lodging, we have some funds, some linens, some utensils and the rest will certainly come in good time. Why delay any longer? Let us invite the poor to come willingly. If they refuse, we shall force them to come." Thus reasoned the ladies. On the contrary, Louise and Vincent preferred to begin in a small way and to progress by degrees. Force was repugnant to them.

They were not understood and the work undertaken through force did not produce the results which the ladies expected. It was far too great for what the ladies had hoped to undertake. It finally came to their yielding to the administrators named by the king. However, they gave a beautiful example of disinterestedness by the disposition which they showed in being willing to continue to render service in the work in the measure in which those in charge would judge it wise to employ them.<sup>44</sup>

The little hospice of forty old people had served as plan and model for that immense hospital which for so many years has served as a shelter for innumerable unfortunate ones.



What a beautiful testimony to the action of Louise for the aged in having been chosen as model and guide of an association of youth of the twentieth century devoted to poor and lonely aged!

That association, under the title of "Louise de Marillac," was officially established in 1909 in the parish of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, an old district of Paris where, 300 years ago, their patroness had begun her visits to the poor and the sick.

In 1915, nineteen groups of the association already existed in Paris and 405 "Louisettes" were alleviating the suffering of poor old grandmothers left without resources. Today, they are spread throughout the world.

Penetrated with the supernatural spirit, the "Louisettes" learned to seek contact with the poor in whom they serve Christ. Their prayer sums up the spirit of the model which must animate them.

Lord, I am going to find one of those whom you have called another self. Grant that the gift I bring to him or to her and the heart with which I give it might be welcomed by my unfortunate brother or sister. . .

Grant that the time spent near him or her as I try to bring some good may be for both of us fruits of productive eternal life. . .

Lord, bless me by the hand of your poor; Lord, smile on me by the smile of your poor; Lord, welcome me one day in the holy company of your poor.<sup>45</sup>

## Chapter 6

### *THE SUFFERING OF THE INSANE*

*Yes, my Sisters, it is God Himself who wished to make use of the Daughters of Charity to take care of the poor insane. Oh! All of you, what a great favor it is for those who are in their service, to have such a beautiful means of serving God and Our Lord, His divine Son.*  
*Saint Vincent de Paul*

The service of the poor insane was one of the last gems in the crown of Saint Louise de Marillac. Saint Vincent loved to remind the first sisters that it was like the fruit of their fidelity in the discharge of their previous duties. He said to them: "God, seeing that they so carefully assisted the poor, seeking them and caring for them in their own homes, as Our Lord did most often, said: 'These girls please Me; they have discharged that duty well; I wish to entrust another one to them.'"

This second one was the care of abandoned children and Saint Vincent added: "As God saw that you fulfilled this with so much charity, He said: 'I want to entrust them with still another employment.'"<sup>1</sup>

And then came the assisting of poor criminals or convicts. Next, the care of the poor old people of the Holy Name of Jesus. Finally, was added the very last, that of "poor people who had lost their mind!"

#### *Saint Vincent Had Been Interested for a Long Time in the Insane*

In 1632, when Saint Vincent moved to Saint Lazare, to live there with his young community, he found several demented persons who were kept locked up. They immediately attracted his sacerdotal heart<sup>2</sup> and he took them under his wing. In no time he discerned which among them had been placed there as intentionally dangerous to society, and who belonged in reformatories, and on the other hand, those who were mentally ill and required medical attention, being either partially or totally irresponsible for their offensive actions.



Let us pray to God, that He may bestow upon the priests of the Company, the spirit needed to act rightly in these sorts of employments, when called upon to do so. May He strengthen our poor brothers, so that with His grace, they may endure the difficulties and the labor encountered daily with these inmates, some of whom are sick in body, and the others sick in mind. Some are stupid and others giddy; some are insane and others are vicious. All are affected in mind, but some through infirmity, and the others through malice. The former are here to regain their health, the latter to amend their evil lives.<sup>3</sup>

Saint Vincent, who loved every one of the poor people with the very Heart of Christ, endeavored, after having probed their moral wounds, to cure them, imparting to his priests and to his brothers who were more directly engaged in assisting them, his optimism and his supernatural manner of viewing their state.

It is not something as unimportant as some may think, to be employed in the relief of the afflicted; for by doing so, one gives pleasure to God. Indeed, to take care of the insane, is one of the works most pleasing to Him, and one so much the more meritorious as nature finds no satisfaction in it. It is done without glamor and for persons who show us no gratitude for it.<sup>4</sup>

He loved them so dearly that one day he declared that were he obliged to leave Saint Lazare, the thing that he would regret the most, would be to leave behind those poor afflicted people.<sup>5</sup>

But his zeal did not stop there, that zeal which as ever exceeded the scope of his personal activity, in order to pour itself out wherever some distress had been brought to his attention. The Great Bureau of the Poor possessed at that time a large hospital in Paris known as *Les Petites Maisons*. In that hospital more than four hundred poor persons of both sexes were housed, including old people, victims of ringworm and the mentally afflicted.<sup>6</sup>

As early as 1639, Saint Vincent went to preach a mission to those poor people, and in order to impress more deeply upon their minds the principal truths of religion and the most common prayers, he compiled a leaflet entitled "The Exercise of the Christian." After having been used at *Les Petites Maisons*<sup>7</sup> this leaflet was later printed in great numbers. It could be understood by the most simple and the most uninstructed.<sup>8</sup>

As ever, Vincent did not stop at introducing a good work. He followed it up, if not always personally, at least by means of others to whom he

had communicated the flame that burned in his heart. The priests of the Tuesday Conferences, following in his footsteps, went to catechize those unfortunate people, and some years later, the Daughters of Charity were permanently installed in their service.

### *Louise de Marillac Accepts Placing Her Daughters at les Petites Maisons*

Saint Louise was not the last one to share the sentiments of Vincent with regard to the poor insane.

From the human viewpoint, that work had nothing attractive about it. Saint Vincent had himself drawn a realistic sketch of it:

At *Les Petites Maisons*, the patients are insane; they are extremely hard to handle, and always cranky. Fighting is constant among them. Oh! it is so beyond description that I can give you no idea of it. Sociability is at such a low ebb that they cannot live even two together, and it was found necessary to separate them. Each one attends to his own cooking.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the Daughters of Charity were asked to staff the infirmary of that hospital by the *Grand Bureau* of the Poor, the equivalent of the Catholic Charities Bureau of today.<sup>10</sup> *Les Petites Maisons* stood on the site presently occupied by the department stores of the Bon Marché. Originally the Saint-Germain-des-Prés Hospice for the sick, it had been transformed into a hospital by Cardinal de Tournon in 1557.<sup>11</sup> Later, it was sold to Guillaume Gellinard, secretary to the Duke of Orleans. It finally became the hospital of the poor under the direction of the gentlemen of the *Grand Bureau*.<sup>12</sup> According to the statutes, there were received therein, "old and decrepid men and other incorrigible and chronic cases, crippled persons, sick women and the insane."<sup>13</sup>

Such a mixture seems strange in our twentieth century, but it must be remembered that there was no legislative measure concerning the insane before September 7, 1660. By that decree of the Parliament, the Hôtel Dieu of Paris was to assign a hall for the insane to whom a special treatment was to be dispensed.<sup>14</sup> Their recovery was generally considered impossible. Saint Vincent was indeed a real pioneer in the field of psychotherapy by his endeavors to improve the condition of the insane as he did for the poor "idiots" locked up at Saint Lazare. For them he procured a special building and placed them in the care of his missionar-



ies, who were to provide wholesome recreations for them and religious exercises in keeping with their malady.<sup>15</sup> Official medical opinions of the period were divided by verbal struggles, and therapeutic procedures often remained quite sterile. These were set aside by Saint Vincent,<sup>16</sup> who was recognized as “director of the first hospital in France which was devoted to the treatment of the insane.”<sup>17</sup> Socially, his efforts were of great importance, for they inaugurated a new type of assistance, a hospital based on the therapeutic belief in the possibility of improving mental illnesses and disorders.<sup>18</sup>

Neither he nor Saint Louise was appalled by the task each was asked to assume at the *Petites Maisons*. Together they prepared their Daughters for the beautiful mission.

### *To See in the Insane Incarnate Wisdom*

That apostolate was accepted with joy and a certain supernatural pride at the thought that among the communities of women, none up to that time had performed this particular work, which recalls Our Lord’s desire “to pass for a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles.”<sup>19</sup>

One of the sisters, who had been among the first sent on duty with the poor insane, remarked in her deposition for the beatification of Saint Vincent, that when they were sent to the Hospital of the *Petites Maisons*, which up to then had been badly organized, Saint Vincent “instilled into them such a high idea of the grace which God bestowed upon them, that they felt inflamed with zeal and encouraged for having given themselves to the service of the poor insane, in spite of the troubles and difficulties involved.”<sup>20</sup>

The soul of Saint Louise, so well prepared for hearing the call of God in all His suffering members, shared his sentiments. In one of her letters she announced the enterprise of that work to Sister Barbara Angiboust, expressing the hope “that we shall soon have our sisters at the *Petites Maisons* to care for the insane and the poor sick women in whatever way possible.”<sup>21</sup> The choice of the personnel being incumbent upon her, Louise thought it over and invoked the help of the Holy Spirit, before entrusting the responsibility of such a mission to Sister Anne Hardemont, who hesitated. However, Saint Louise assured Saint Vincent in a letter that “she is not far from favorably accepting the proposal of going to the *Petites Maisons*.” Encouragement was needed, and Louise asked Vincent

“to kindly give a talk to the sisters that would make them recognize the good that can be accomplished and the manner of going about it.”<sup>22</sup>

### *Saint Vincent Speaks to the First Sisters*

September 29, 1655—An informal “meeting” like preceding ones, took place on that day when the sisters had come from various parishes. Vincent was to read the Holy Rules, but beforehand he wanted to say something about the obligation of giving oneself to God to observe them well. Speaking from the abundance of his heart, he gave for a first reason: the goodness of God, the Will of God, the pleasure and the joy of God. Then he told them that everything goes well when one is faithful to observing the Rules and that they are easy, coming from God and tending towards Him.

After reading the first article, he exclaimed:

Ah! my Sisters, I am telling you once more, never has there been a Company who gave greater glory to God than yours. Is there any that looks after the poor insane? You won't find any, and that happiness is yours. The Gentlemen of the *Grand Bureau* thought that in order to succeed in managing properly that large hospital of poor insane it was necessary to appeal to the poor Daughters of Charity. In fact, they persisted in pressing us, until we complied with their wishes and sent the sisters. Ah! my Daughters, how greatly you are indebted to God!<sup>23</sup>

Three weeks later he again took up the subject:

You must consider, my Sisters, that Our Lord willed to experience in His own Person, all afflictions imaginable. Holy Scripture states that He willed to pass for a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles, in order to show you that you are able to serve Him under any form in the poor afflicted. This is why He vouchsafed to assume that state, in order to sanctify it like all the others. It is in that conviction that you must wait on them, and rejoice when you approach them, saying within yourselves: ‘I am going to these poor in order to honor in their person, the Person of Our Lord; I am going to behold in them the incarnate Wisdom of God, Who willed to pass as such, though only in appearance. You must know that He is in those poor creatures bereft of reason just as much as He is in all others.’<sup>24</sup>



### *The Sisters at "Les Petites Maisons"*

Encouraged by Faith, our first sisters entered upon their new field of action. As everywhere else, very lowly duties were waiting for them: the clothes room, the kitchen duty, the infirmary.<sup>25</sup> But all their actions were permeated with a supernatural spirit: the love of God and of the neighbor.

And in time order was gradually established. According to the account of Abelly: "The Administrators rendered the testimony that those good girls had eliminated a number of disorders which tended to offend God, to ruin the property of the house and to effect those poor insane, so that all were greatly edified at the conduct of the sisters and greatly satisfied with them."<sup>26</sup>

The house remained ever filled, so that even Saint Vincent had at times difficulty in finding room for more. He expressed regret about this to Sister Marguerite Chétif, in a letter of June 22, 1658, as he was not able to procure for her the consolation of "securing admittance to *Les Petites Maisons* for that good man, mentally afflicted, about whom you wrote to me, because there is never a vacancy, since reservations are made a long time before there is an opening."<sup>27</sup>

The sisters occasionally had the joy of seeing Vincent coming in person to visit them and to follow up the patients whom he had been able to have admitted there. At his process of beatification, a Daughter of Charity reported that she recalled in particular,

. . . a lady, who had become so violent that she had to be watched by four men, and a young girl, afflicted with the same insanity, both having been placed there by the Servant of God. One of them remained nearly two months and the other, six weeks. The sister on duty considered as a blessing granted by God through the merits of His Servant, that both these women were cured. The lady made a general confession before being discharged and afterwards directed her family and household with great prudence, and the young girl became a religious.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the ever-increasing work, the sisters afforded great joy to Saint Vincent and Saint Louise by their fidelity to meditation twice a day, that exercise of mental prayer without which "it is impossible for a Daughter of Charity to live." "When all have not the time to stop for making it in the afternoon, we read the point, and then each one tries to make her meditation coming and going," one of them related when she was questioned by Saint Vincent at the Conference of November 17, 1658<sup>29</sup> about their exactitude in making mental prayer.



A record of that time relates that at the beginning of the foundation, there were six sisters who cheerfully went about their work in the sight of God. There were from sixty to seventy insane and the infirmary had 18 beds: four for men, 14 for women.<sup>30</sup> That infirmary grew rapidly larger. To the reader accustomed to read that in Paris before 1789, the sick slept four or six in the same bed, it is interesting to learn that in the *Petites Maisons*, at that epoch, the infirmaries had 150 small beds.<sup>31</sup>

The fidelity of the sisters was rewarded by the continuation of their work during the years of the Revolution. Only putting aside their religious habits, they continued to give to the poor their care and their consolation.<sup>32</sup>

### *Solicitude of Louise*

Her personal suffering had made Louise meditate in a very particular manner upon the divine significance of sickness. The advice, which she addressed to her Daughters serving the suffering, was filled not only with a supernatural spirit but also with a very practical one, which we like to call today "modern." Once again we see in it the importance which she attached to cleanliness: "I do not know if you are accustomed to wash the hands of the poor," she wrote to one of the sisters. "If not, I beg you to acquire the habit."<sup>33</sup> To another, she asked if she kept towels at the bedside of the sick and if she kept them clean.<sup>34</sup>

In her own account of the establishment of the hospital of the Daughters of Charity at Nantes, where she led them, Louise affirmed having asked that the sick should receive "what was needed and what was clean."<sup>35</sup> After her death, her Daughters testified that no detail referring to the relief of the sick ever escaped her solicitude.

Although her correspondence does not furnish the details of the installation of the sisters at the *Petites Maisons*, it is very possible that Louise's advice was the same or very similar to that which she gave to the first nurses in the service of the insane. What is certain is that she had been thinking of the misery of those poor afflicted creatures for a long time. About ten years before placing her Daughters there, she was heard to say that at the very thought of the establishment of the *Petites Maisons*, she would have liked "to devote herself to that work."<sup>36</sup>

If documents are also missing concerning her visits to the sisters who cared for those poor afflicted ones, we know that Louise was well informed about all that took place there. All her efforts tended to maintain



in the house the peace and union necessary among all who shared its service.

As a result of a misunderstanding concerning the sick between the pastor of the parish, who was also Chaplain at the *Petites Maisons*, and Sister Anne Hardemont, Superior of the sisters, the latter wrote to Vincent asking for a change of confessor. The saint granted her desire but only after requiring that she offer her apology, which he took the trouble of having the pastor accept. Several gentlemen of the *Bureau* having learned of the affair, made known that at the next meeting they would let the pastor know how displeased they were with him. Louise however clarified the matter with the administrators.

In the name of God, Sir, she wrote to Mr. Beguin, member of the *Grand Bureau* of the Poor, I beg you very humbly not to let that happen because of the respect that we owe to the character and virtue of the Reverend Pastor who has so frequently edified our sisters. I beg your very humble pardon, Sir, that I should take this liberty. While writing to you, I realize that you know him better than I and that all the gentlemen know too well the need they have of maintaining his authority for the glory of God and the good of the souls entrusted to his care. Louise concluded by affirming, that should there arise the slightest disgrace to this person whom you must honor, we shall be forced to withdraw our sisters.<sup>37</sup>

Experience proved, however, that Vincent judged it necessary to withdraw the Superior. The position was not an easy one. We learn some details about it in an interesting biography of a Sister Nicole, who was one of the pillars of the establishment.

### *One of the First Sisters of Charity on Duty with the Insane*

She did not arrive at *Les Petites Maisons* in the flower of youth but on the contrary in order to end her days among those poor whom she had loved so tenderly.

Sister Nicole was the daughter of Jean Boquet and Madeleine Lequin, who lived in the city of Crèque in the diocese of Lyons, where Nicole was baptized on March 24, 1626. She was welcomed into the Community of the Daughters of Charity by the Foundress herself on June 25, 1649 and received her Habit on

August 14 of the same year. She pronounced her Holy Vows for the first time on September 17, 1654. She died in the service of the poor insane, at the Hospital of *Les Petites Maisons* in Paris on February 17, 1703.<sup>38</sup>

Advanced in years when she was placed in the service of the poor insane, she discharged this duty perfectly, according to the testimony of the Superioress, and with more zeal and fervor than might have been expected from a person of her age. Wounded several times and greatly maltreated, very far from showing any resentment, she was delighted to receive those ill-treatments and often expressed the desire of dying in rendering service to those poor afflicted creatures.

From the very first year that she was in their service, God offered her an occasion for exercising charity towards a poor insane man who was brought to us. One of his legs was half eaten away and filled with maggots. He had been afflicted with this trouble for a very long time. For three years he had been boarding with someone who saw that he received treatments from surgeons, who applied every imaginable remedy to his sores but without results, for he was judged incurable. When he was brought to *Les Petites Maisons*, he was shown to the surgeon who, like the attendant, soon tired of caring for him because of his infection and of the very offensive odor. Both abandoned him with no intention of approaching him again. On seeing this, Sister Nicole took it upon herself to care for him, and did it with so much affection and trust in God, that with some simple remedies which she had in her use, she cured him perfectly in no time.

We saw her perform several other similar cures, for it was always she who dressed the sores of those poor afflicted, although she was advanced in years. From the very beginning, she took her turn in staying up at night with the sick, just like one of the youngest, doing so to relieve her sisters. She delighted in instructing her companions, gave them object lessons in dressing wounds, and preparing remedies. She endeavored to impart to them all the knowledge she possessed in order to make them competent servants of the poor.<sup>39</sup>



### *And Since Those Days?*

How many hundreds of Daughters of Louise de Marillac have thus sanctified themselves and sanctified their poor sick in all parts of the world? That is God's secret. However, a random selection is revealing.

In the eighteenth century, a Sister Jeanne Lévêque was on duty in the Hospice Saint Nicolas in Metz, where she spent the 43 years of her community life, and where she died. She devoted 22 of those years "to the care of the insane confined to jail, wretched creatures of ungrateful character and bad conduct, which rendered their service most painful. In addition, they were often afflicted with the most disgusting diseases, some with scrofula, epilepsy and other incurable maladies. All these trying contacts never ruffled her, so that she never lost her peaceful expression, her evenness of temper, her invincible patience, her insuperable meekness. She spoke of God to those poor afflicted in such an eloquent way, that the Reverend Chaplains, who secretly listened to her words, declared that it was only at the school of the Holy Spirit that any one could have received such light."<sup>40</sup>

In the nineteenth century in the United States, Sister Mathilde Coskerey likewise earned a rich treasury of merits in the service of the insane.

"In her youth she had received solid lessons from Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton and Reverend Bruté de Rémur. A young inexperienced sister told her: 'I am young, but I am most willing to learn how to take care of the insane.' Sister Coskerey smiled graciously and said: 'Nothing more is necessary, my dear Sister, I shall teach you.' Before assigning anything to me, she would kindly explain the duty in detail, telling me what to do and what to say. Her advice ordinarily ended with these words, similar to those of Louise de Marillac two centuries previously: 'Do your actions for God alone; accustom yourself to see Him in all your patients and do not consult your likes and dislikes.' As she walked through the wards, she always had some kind words to say. Seeing me busy preparing what was needed for the patients, she would say to me: 'Take pains with that beverage, remembering that it is for Our Lord you are doing this.'<sup>41</sup>

### *In the Twentieth Century*

The hospital for the insane in Baltimore, where Sister Mathilde had devoted herself more than a century before, was renamed Seton Institute in 1949. A course for the formation of Catholic psychiatrists was inaugu-

rated. The hierarchy of the United States, frightened by the materialistic philosophy, underlying the formation of psychiatrists in secular schools, addressed itself to the Daughters of Charity for the establishment of this center of psychiatric study. The history of 1655 repeated itself on another continent and the words of Saint Vincent were still applicable: "The gentlemen of the *Grand Bureau* have thought that in order to conduct this large establishment for the poor insane, it was necessary to appeal to the poor Daughters of Charity."<sup>42</sup>

The service of the poor insane continues to be practiced after the manner of the Holy Foundress in various parts of the world. Thus, a young girl, who had recently returned from the Holy Land, was relating her impressions: "Sister, do you know what impressed me most after the sight of the Holy Places? Well, it was the sister on mission with the insane at X. Like a mother weeping for her children, she never stopped lamenting her patients killed during the bombing."<sup>43</sup>

And how deep and encouraging is this comment of a good sister on her sick bed in the infirmary, who offers her sufferings and prayers for her companions and their patients: "You see, there is no more beautiful duty than the service of the insane, for they are victims; they are making reparation for human pride. To serve them is likewise making reparation."<sup>44</sup>

Worthy Daughters of Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul, they can repeat with them:

Let us bless the Lord and let us thank Him for calling us to take care of these poor people bereft of their mind and unable to guide themselves, for by serving them we see and realize how great and varied are human miseries. By this knowledge, we shall be better qualified to labor usefully for our neighbor. We shall discharge our duties with greater fidelity as we shall better know through experience what it means to suffer.<sup>45</sup>



## CONCLUSION

The poor, the sick, foundlings, poor children, prisoners, the aged, the insane have one common characteristic: suffering!

It was this suffering which Louise de Marillac wished to relieve, encouraged and stimulated by Vincent de Paul, who revealed to her the mystery of "the poor in whom God dwells" and whose physical or moral wounds need healing.

Louise's works were very personal at first but became gradually more absorbing and captivating.

Confronted with a gigantic task, Louise felt her helplessness and appealed to other devoted souls, who grouped themselves around the leaders: Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac.

Ladies of Charity and more particularly Daughters of Charity, among others, owe their life to them. In fact, it is this action initiated, directed, multiplied, and varied to an infinite degree which, by the vastness of its undertakings as well as by its lasting character, gives to the work of Louise de Marillac its social aspect so eminently useful, and which today's Social Service continues, adding merely to it the technical developments of the twentieth century.

In each suffering individual, Saint Louise saw "Jesus in agony until the end of the world," as Pascal was wont to say. She wished to relieve Him, to console Him, to instruct Him, to nourish Him, to clothe Him, to visit Him, to care for Him, and to alleviate His last moments.

Feeling her powerlessness in face of the immense distress that surrounded her, she welcomed souls of good will won over like herself to the concrete ideal of Christ to be served in His suffering members. With her keen intelligence, she prevented the wound of misery whenever possible. At other times, she sought its remedy and applied it prudently and perseveringly. Good village girls seemed to her a marvelous instrument to be able to render help, where she alone could have accomplished nought.

In order to train them, to rub shoulders with them, to lead them on ever higher, she dedicated her life. When exhausted and she mentioned death,

Vincent would retain her here below as being “too useful to our poor world.”

Such is the plea re-echoed more than three centuries later to those in whom she relives.

Nurses of the poor in hospitals or in their homes, social workers, teachers of poor children, mothers of orphans, visitors of prisoners, or dietitians of the poor and needy, are ever inspired by the advice of “Monsieur Vincent” and of “Mademoiselle”:

The spirit of the Company consists in giving oneself to God to love Our Lord and to serve Him in the person of the poor corporally and spiritually, in their homes or elsewhere, to instruct poor children and generally all those whom Divine Providence sends you.

You would not be a Daughter of Charity if you were not always ready to render service to those who might need it.

Saint Vincent de Paul

February 9, 1653

A true Daughter of Charity belongs to God for the service of the Poor.

Saint Louise de Marillac

September 3, 1659





## NOTES

Notes, Sources, Abbreviations, Bibliography, Reviews And Publications, are retained in the original French.

### *Introduction*

<sup>1</sup> GABRIEL HANOTAUX, *Histoire du Cardinal de Richelieu, La France en 1614*, (Paris: Plon, 1893), I, 211.

<sup>2</sup> Le titre d'écuyer porté par Antoine Le Gras n'avait jamais permis à sa femme d'être appelée *Madame*. Après l'établissement des Filles de la Charité, on continua à l'appeler Mademoiselle Le Gras ou « Mademoiselle » tout court.

<sup>3</sup> BERNARD GAUDEUL, *Saint Vincent de Paul, Précurseur de l'Assistance Publique*, (Paris: Fernand Sorlot, 1938), titre.

<sup>4</sup> CHARLES DEPLACÉ, *Panegyrique de saint Vincent de Paul et discours divers*, (Paris: A. Le Clere, 1857), p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> LOUIS ABELLY, *Vie de saint Vincent de Paul*, (Paris: Poussielgue et Fils, 1865), I, 65.

<sup>6</sup> PIERRE COSTE, *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Dames de la Charité*, (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1917), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> GEORGES GOYAU, *Les Dames de la Charité de Monsieur Vincent*, (Paris: Art Catholique, 1918), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> (Après 1630, la signature ordinaire de Mademoiselle Le Gras était plutôt *Louise de Marillac*. Nous emploierons l'une ou l'autre appellation selon les circonstances, avec une préférence pour celle-ci).

<sup>9</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 144.

<sup>10</sup> VICTOR L. TAPIÉ, *La France de Louis XIII et de Richelieu*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1952), p. 347.

<sup>11</sup> P. COSTE, C. BAUSSAN, G. GOYAU, *Les Filles de la Charité*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, 1933), p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> PIERRE COSTE, *Saint Vincent de Paul*, (Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents), (Paris: Gabalda, 1920), II, 549. (Nous citerons saint Vincent d'après cette édition, sous le titre Coste, *OEuvres*, tome, page).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 76.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>16</sup> NICOLAS GOBILLON, *La Vie de Mademoiselle Le Gras*, (Bruges, 1886 reproduction textuelle de l'édition de 1676), p. iv.



<sup>17</sup> P. COLLET, *La Vie de la Vénérable Louise de Marillac*, (Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, 1862), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> COMTESSE DE RICHEMONT, *Histoire de Mademoiselle Le Gras*, (Paris: Poussielgue Frères, 1883), p. xx.

<sup>19</sup> Monseigneur LOUIS BAUNARD, *La Vénérable Louise de Marillac*, (Paris: Poussielgue, 1904), p. xviii.

<sup>20</sup> Monseigneur JEAN CALVET, *Saint Vincent de Paul*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948), p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> A. FLOQUET, *Etudes sur la vie de Bossuet*, (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1855), I, 503.

<sup>2</sup> « Décret du 2 novembre 1933, » *Les Rayons*, (mars-avril, 1934), p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 549; IX, 312, 348, 470.

<sup>5</sup> LÉONCE CELIER, *Les Filles de la Charité*, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1951), p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> A. R. B. LOUISE DE MARILLAC, *Ecrits Autographes (Pensées)*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> A. R. B. *Lettres diverses à Mademoiselle Le Gras*, N° 185.

<sup>8</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, II, 359.

<sup>9</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 26.

<sup>10</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N° 1.

<sup>11</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 31.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>16</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 73.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>19</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 75.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>23</sup> LOUIS DEPLANQUE, *Saint Vincent de Paul et sainte Louise de Marillac*, (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1936), p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> PIERRE COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, le Grand Saint du Grand Siècle*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, 1931), I, 241.

<sup>25</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 126.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>29</sup> CALVET, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

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- <sup>30</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 86.  
<sup>31</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, I, 381, 383, 455.  
<sup>32</sup> RICHEMONT, *op. cit.*, p. 148.  
<sup>33</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, I, 361.  
<sup>34</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 52.  
<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.  
<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.  
<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.  
<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.  
<sup>39</sup> *Supra*, p. 16.  
<sup>40</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 78.  
<sup>41</sup> BAUNARD, *op. cit.*, p. 129.  
<sup>42</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 78.  
<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 212.  
<sup>44</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, I, 265.  
<sup>45</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 113.  
<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.  
<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.  
<sup>48</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, N<sup>o</sup> 627.  
<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 141.  
<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 565.  
<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 573.  
<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 29.  
<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 47.  
<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 104.  
<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 105.  
<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 166.  
<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 208.  
<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 245.  
<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 313.  
<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 375.  
<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 362.  
<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 577 bis.  
<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 618.  
<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 621.  
<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 651.  
<sup>66</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 79-94.  
<sup>67</sup> CALVET, *op. cit.*, p. 332.  
<sup>68</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, II, 53.  
<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 238.  
<sup>70</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 4.  
<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 45.  
<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 619.  
<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 580.  
<sup>74</sup> M. D. POINSENET, *France Religieuse du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Paris: Casterman, 1952), p. 22.  
<sup>75</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 181 bis.



<sup>76</sup> GAËTAN BERNOVILLE, *Ste Angèle Mérici, les Ursulines de France et l'Union Romaine*, (Paris: Grasset, 1947), p. 157.

<sup>77</sup> M. le Curé de Saint-Sulpice, *Vie de Saint François de Sales*, (Paris: Jacques Lecoffre et Cie, 1856), II, 75.

<sup>78</sup> FRANCOIS DE DAINVILLE, S. J., « L'accès des religieuses à la vie active, » *La Vie Spirituelle*, (Juillet 1949), p. 48.

<sup>79</sup> P. HÉLYOT, *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques religieux et militaires et des Congrégations séculières*, (Paris, 1719), VII, 303.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 409.

<sup>81</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>83</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 283.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 48.

<sup>85</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 533.

<sup>86</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 481.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 609.

<sup>88</sup> MARIE CHALANDARD, *La Promotion de la Femme à l'Apostolat*, (Paris: Editions Alsatia, 1950), p. 157.

<sup>89</sup> F. PETIT, *L'Eglise et les Instituts séculiers*, (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1952), p. 55.

<sup>90</sup> ANDRE MÉNABRÉA, « Le maître de la Science Sociale, » *l'Hygiène Sociale*, (Juin 1942), p. 119.

<sup>91</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 658.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 733.

<sup>93</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 377.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 655.

<sup>95</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 661; cf. A. R. B. *Règles des Filles de la Charité*, Chapitre I, article 2.

<sup>96</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 148.

<sup>97</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, I, 393.

<sup>98</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 557.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 409.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 121.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 409.

<sup>102</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Avis*, N<sup>o</sup> 86.

<sup>103</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 439.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 276.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 246.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 632.

<sup>107</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 231.

<sup>108</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Avis*, N<sup>o</sup> 61.

<sup>109</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 220

<sup>110</sup> *Louise de Marillac, sa Vie, ses Vertus, son Esprit*, (Bruges: Société Saint-Augustin, 1886), II, 82.

<sup>111</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 89.

<sup>112</sup> *Supra*, p. 59,(3).

<sup>113</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 489 bis.

- 114 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 392.  
115 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 655.  
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118 GAUDEUL, *op. cit.*, p. 10.  
119 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 352.  
120 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 591.  
121 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 596.  
122 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 620.  
123 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, pp. 234-235.  
124 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 225.  
125 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 65.  
126 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 649.  
127 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 604.  
128 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 614.  
129 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 349.  
130 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 625.  
131 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 621.  
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133 *Ibid.*, IX, 601.  
134 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Avis*, N<sup>o</sup> 60, p. 156.  
135 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 144.  
136 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Avis*, p. 220.  
137 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 424.  
138 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 435.  
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140 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 144.  
141 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 632.  
142 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 598.  
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144 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 217.  
145 A. R. B. *Règles des Filles de la Charité*, « Règles des Soeurs des villages, »  
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146 *Ibid.*, « Règles des Soeurs des paroisses, » article 9.  
147 COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 371.  
148 L. COSNIER, *Les Soeurs Hospitalières*, (Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1898), p. 117.  
149 *Ibidem.*  
150 *Ibidem.*  
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152 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 315.  
153 *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 656.  
154 GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 160.  
155 A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, « Testament, » *Ecrits Autographes*, N<sup>o</sup> 114.  
156 *Ibidem.*  
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158 *Ibid.*, IX, 241.  
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<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>161</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 644.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 330.

<sup>163</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux et des Soeurs Supérieures aux Filles de la Charité et Remarques ou Notices sur les Soeurs défunttes de la Communauté*, (Paris: "Adrien Le Clere et Cie, 1845), II, 303.

<sup>164</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 510.

## Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> LÉON LALLEMAND, *Un chapitre de l'histoire des Enfants Trouvés, La Maison de la Couche à Paris*, (Paris: H. Champion, 1885), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> J. F. TERME et J. B. MONFALCON, *Histoire des Enfants Trouvés*, (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1837), p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Docteur GEORGES RENOUX, *L'Assistance aux Enfants du Premier Age à Paris au XVI<sup>e</sup> et au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, (Paris: Amédée Legrand, 1924), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, II, 454.

<sup>5</sup> Dom JACQUES DU BREUL, *Le théâtre des Antiquités de Paris*, (Paris: Société des Imprimeurs, 1639), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> LALLEMAND, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Dom MICHEL FÉLIBIEN, *Histoire de la ville de Paris*, (Paris: G. Desprez, 1725), II, 831.

<sup>8</sup> LAURENT BOUCHEL, *La Bibliothèque ou Trésor du droit français*, (Paris: J. Girin, 1671), I, 1014; cf. Du Breul, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, XIII, 798.

<sup>10</sup> TERME et MONFALCON, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, XIII, 798.

<sup>12</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 185.

<sup>13</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>14</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 410.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 581.

<sup>16</sup> RENOUX, *op. cit.*, p. 39, (citant la Délibération de l'Hôtel-Dieu du 29 mai 1634).

<sup>17</sup> JACQUES DEHAUSSE, *L'Assistance publique à l'enfance, enfants abandonnés*, (Paris: du Recueil Sirey, 1951), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> CALVET, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>19</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 417.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 132-134.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 256.

<sup>25</sup> BAUNARD, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> B. N. *Cabinet d'Hozier*, 76, f<sup>o</sup> 13.

<sup>27</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, I, 215.

<sup>28</sup> HILARION DE COSTE, *Les éloges et les vies des reynes, princesses, dames et*

*demoiselles illustres en piété, en courage et en doctrine*, (Paris: G. Cramoisy, 1647), II, 106.

<sup>29</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> B. N. p. o. Marillac, pièce 316.

<sup>31</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Ecrits Autographes*, N° 29, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 584.

<sup>33</sup> E. CARDINAL PACELLI, *Panegyrique de sainte Louise de Marillac*, (Rome: Officina Tipografica Romana « Buona Stampa, » 1934), p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 423.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>37</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 186.

<sup>38</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 437.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 444.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>41</sup> COSTE, *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Dames de la Charité, op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 362.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 439.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 436.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 444.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 505.

<sup>48</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 202.

<sup>49</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 440.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 507.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 481.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 459.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 6.

<sup>55</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, II, 459.

<sup>56</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 188.

<sup>57</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 445.

<sup>58</sup> LALLEMAND, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem.* (Lallemand cite la copie des Archives des Enfants Assistés, liasse de Mars 1640).

<sup>62</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, pp. 199-202.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>64</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, XIII, 782.

<sup>65</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, II, 370.

<sup>66</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, II, 296.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>68</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N° 633.

<sup>69</sup> LALLEMAND, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>70</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N° 142.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, N° 104 bis.



- <sup>72</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, XIII, 596.  
<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 652.  
<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem.*  
<sup>75</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 260.  
<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 354.  
<sup>77</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, V, 158.  
<sup>78</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 266.  
<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 267.  
<sup>80</sup> BAUNARD, *op. cit.*, p. 404.  
<sup>81</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 273.  
<sup>82</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, III, 524.  
<sup>83</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 232.  
<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 212.  
<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 279.  
<sup>86</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IV, 21.  
<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem.*  
<sup>88</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 96.  
<sup>89</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 266.  
<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 283.  
<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 195.  
<sup>92</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 240.  
<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem.*  
<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 131.  
<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.  
<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.  
<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.  
<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 47.  
<sup>99</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 196.  
<sup>100</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 202.  
<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 157.  
<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 234.  
<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 86.  
<sup>104</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, III, 210.  
<sup>105</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 125.  
<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 188.  
<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 239.  
<sup>108</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 197.  
<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem.*  
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<sup>111</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 193.  
<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 192.  
<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 202.  
<sup>114</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 198.  
<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.  
<sup>116</sup> *Ibidem.*  
<sup>117</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 493.

<sup>118</sup> « Causerie d'Assistance Sociale, » *L'Echo de la Maison-Mère des Filles de la Charité de Saint Vincent de Paul*, (Décembre 1934), p. 261.

<sup>119</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, VI, 295.

<sup>120</sup> *Circulaire des Supérieurs Généraux. . . op. cit.*, II, 417.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308

<sup>123</sup> DEHAUSSY, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>124</sup> LALLEMAND, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>125</sup> TERME et MONFALCON, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>126</sup> LALLEMAND, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>127</sup> F. T. CHOISY, *Vie de Madame de Miramion*, (Paris: Antoine Dezallier, 1707), p. 164.

<sup>128</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 139.

<sup>129</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 187-188.

<sup>130</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, XIII, 305.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 382.

<sup>132</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 348.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 349.

<sup>134</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IV, 407.

<sup>135</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 353.

<sup>136</sup> H. CARRIER, *Les origines de la Maternité de Paris*, (Paris: G. Steinheil, 1888),

p. 64.

<sup>137</sup> LALLEMAND, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, « Observations sur les Enfants Trouvés, » *Ecrits Autographes*, N<sup>o</sup> 81, p. 196.

<sup>139</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 645.

<sup>140</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 137.

### Chapter 3

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<sup>2</sup> GUSTAVE FAGNIEZ, *La femme et la société française dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Paris: J. Gamber, 1929), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 238.

<sup>5</sup> ALBERT BABEAU, *L'instruction primaire dans les campagnes avant 1789*, (Troyes: Dufour-Bouquot, 1875), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, I, 125.

<sup>7</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> OCTAVE NOËL, *Histoire de la Ville de Poissy*, (Poissy: Marchand, 1869), pp. 181-239.

<sup>9</sup> *Supra*, p. 86(3).

<sup>10</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 119.

<sup>11</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> *Supra*, p. 16.



- <sup>13</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 77.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 161.
- <sup>16</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, « Projet de Règlement, » *Ecrits Autographes*, N<sup>o</sup> 54, p. 138.
- <sup>17</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 526.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 93.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 436.
- <sup>20</sup> *Supra*, p. 131(1); cf. COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, IX, 219.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>22</sup> « Ecrit de Soeur Barbe Bailly sur les vertus de Mademoiselle Le Gras, » *Louise de Marillac, sa vie, ses vertus, son esprit, op. cit.*, I, 224.
- <sup>23</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 313.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 7.
- <sup>25</sup> Le mot « créance » se répète dans les écrits de Louise de Marillac. De la même source que *croissance*, il s'employait plus généralement pour signifier « croyance religieuse. » HATZFELD et DARMESTETER, *Dictionnaire Générale de la langue française*, I, 586.
- <sup>26</sup> BERNOVILLE, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- <sup>27</sup> a Procès-Verbaux inédits de la Commission de l'Enseignement, » *Le Correspondant*, (25 mars 1879), p. 989.
- <sup>28</sup> RICHEMONT, *op. cit.*, p. 181.
- <sup>29</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 41.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, placée après la lettre N<sup>o</sup> 41.
- <sup>31</sup> LOUIS PRUNEL, *La Renaissance Catholique en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer et Cie, 1921), p. 227; cf. FAGNIEZ, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- <sup>32</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 208.
- <sup>33</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 267.
- <sup>34</sup> FAGNIEZ, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
- <sup>35</sup> A. R. B. « Conseil du 22 mars 1648, » *Recueil des Procès-Verbaux des Conseils tenus par saint Vincent de Paul et Mademoiselle Le Gras*.
- <sup>36</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 627.
- <sup>37</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, pp. 102-103.
- <sup>38</sup> A. R. B. Louise De Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 529.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 200 bis.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 175.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 200.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 646.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 163.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 598.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 368.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 192.
- <sup>47</sup> *Supra*, p. 114.
- <sup>48</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, II, 469.
- <sup>49</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 599.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 352.
- <sup>51</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, I, 393.

- <sup>52</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N° 611.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, N° 192.
- <sup>54</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, II, 164.
- <sup>55</sup> BERNOVILLE, *op. cit.*, p. 152.
- <sup>56</sup> *Documents historiques sur la Famille de Marillac*, (recueillis par les descendants de Jacques-Victor-Hippolyte de Marillac), (Paris: Imp. Générale Lahure, 1908), p. 38.
- <sup>57</sup> PRUNEL, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
- <sup>58</sup> BERNOVILLE, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- <sup>59</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N° 175.
- <sup>60</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, X, 732.
- <sup>61</sup> CELIER, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
- <sup>62</sup> A. R. B. « Règles particulières pour la maîtresse d'école, » Article 27, *Règles des Filles de la Charité*.
- <sup>63</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N° 611.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, N° 200 bis.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, N° 163.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, N° 611.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, N° 646.
- <sup>69</sup> A. R. B. «Pratiques que nos Soeurs doivent faire sur les chemins, *Pensées*, p. 192.
- <sup>70</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N° 175.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, N° 432.
- <sup>72</sup> A. R. B. « Observations sur les Règles Particulières des Soeurs employées aux villages, » *Pensées*, p. 235.
- <sup>73</sup> A. R. B. « Règles particulières pour la maîtresse d'école, » *op. cit.*, Article 5.
- <sup>74</sup> A. R. B. « Extraits des Règles particulières pour la maîtresse d'école. »

## Chapter 4

- <sup>1</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, X, 128; 340; 369.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- <sup>3</sup> PIERRE COLLET, *La vie de saint Vincent de Paul*, (Nancy, 1748), I, 95.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>5</sup> GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- <sup>6</sup> *OEuvres Complètes de Bourdaloue*, (Versailles: J.-A. Lebel, 1812), VIII, 53.
- <sup>7</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, I, 166.
- <sup>8</sup> Comte RENÉ DE VOYER D'ARGENSON, *Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, (Marseille: Beauchet-Filleau, 1900), p. 28.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>10</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 127.
- <sup>11</sup> ARGENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- <sup>12</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, XIII, 201.
- <sup>13</sup> *Supra*, p. 152(2).



- <sup>14</sup> COSTE, *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, II, 6.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 166.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 114.
- <sup>20</sup> A. R. B. "Règlement pour les Soeurs qui ont soin des Galériens, » *Pensées*, p. 149 (Article 2).
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 3.
- <sup>22</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux, op. cit.*, II, 403.
- <sup>23</sup> ARGENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 14.
- <sup>25</sup> *Supra*, p. 161(2).
- <sup>26</sup> COSTE, *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, X, 204.
- <sup>27</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, II, 476.
- <sup>28</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 408.
- <sup>29</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 321.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151, (Article 8).
- <sup>31</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 104 bis; cf. GOBILLON, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- <sup>32</sup> *Supra*, (1).
- <sup>33</sup> COSTE, *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, X, 645.
- <sup>34</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 153, (Article 13).
- <sup>35</sup> COSTE, *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, II, 259.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 645.
- <sup>37</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux, op. cit.*, II, 364.
- <sup>38</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 112.
- <sup>39</sup> *Supra*, p. 31, (4).
- <sup>40</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 152, (Article 11).
- <sup>41</sup> *Supra*, p. 163 (1).
- <sup>42</sup> COSTE, *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, X, 710.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>44</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 151, (Article 6).
- <sup>45</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux, op. cit.*, II, 404.
- <sup>46</sup> LEON CAHEN, « Les idées charitables à Paris au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après les règlements des confréries paroissiales, » *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, (mai-juin 1900), p. 11.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403.
- <sup>48</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 152. (Article 9).
- <sup>49</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 472.
- <sup>50</sup> COSTE, *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, II, 174.
- <sup>51</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux, op. cit.*, II, 404.
- <sup>52</sup> COSTE, *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, X, 114.
- <sup>53</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 154, (Article 18).
- <sup>54</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 144.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 283.
- <sup>56</sup> ARGENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- <sup>57</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux, op. cit.*, II, 800.

<sup>58</sup> *Supra*, p. 149.

<sup>59</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux, op. cit.*, II, 903.

<sup>60</sup> *Livre d'Or des Filles de la Charité ou Simple aperçu des plus belles notices des Soeurs*, (Paris: Maison-Mère des Filles de la Charité, de 1871 à 1900), II, 108.

<sup>61</sup> A. R. B. "Obra de San Vincente de Paul al Servicio del Preso, » *Rapports de Cuba*, 1940-1948.

## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> LÉON LALLEMAND, *Histoire de la Charité*, (Paris: Picard, 1905-1912), III, 21.

<sup>2</sup> CHRISTIAN PAULTRE, *De la Répression de la Mendicité et du Vagabondage*, (Paris: Larose et Tenin, 1906), p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 249.

<sup>4</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, II, 483. (Coste cite « Mémoires concernant les pauvres que l'on appelle enfermez » de MM. L. Cimber et F. Danjou, première série, XV, 256).

<sup>5</sup> FELIBIEN, *op. cit.*, III, 596.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 656.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> CAHEN, « Les idées charitables à Paris au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. . . , » *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> LOUIS BATIFFOL, *La Vie de Paris sous Louis XIII*, (Paris, 1932), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> A. FEILLET, *La misère au temps de la Fronde et saint Vincent de Paul*, (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1868), p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> LALLEMAND, *Histoire de la Charité, op. cit.*, IV, 157.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>14</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 84.

<sup>15</sup> *Archives Nationales*, S 6.601.

<sup>16</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent, op. cit.*, II, 490; cf. ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 278.

<sup>17</sup> PAULTRE, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>18</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 265.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 365 bis.

<sup>21</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 267.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> PIERRE DELORE, « Les problèmes hospitaliers des malades chroniques et des vieillards, » *Pages Documentaires*, (Octobre-novembre, 1951), p. 38.

<sup>25</sup> *Quémans*: ancien français (primitivement trisyllabe « caimans » d'origine inconnue) vieilli — mendiants; d'après A. Hatzfeld et A. Darmesteter, *Dictionnaire général*. . .

<sup>26</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 271.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> *Supra*, p. 162, (3).



- <sup>29</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, pp. 272-273.  
<sup>30</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 373.  
<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 360.  
<sup>32</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, IV, 552.  
<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, 157.  
<sup>34</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 364.  
<sup>35</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, XIII, 160.  
<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem.*  
<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.  
<sup>38</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 279.  
<sup>39</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 365 bis.  
<sup>40</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, VIII, 75.  
<sup>41</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Pensées*, p. 286.  
<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem.*  
<sup>43</sup> COSTE, *Monsieur Vincent*, *op. cit.*, II, 498.  
<sup>44</sup> *L'Hôpital Général Charitable*, (Paris, 1657), p. 9.  
<sup>45</sup> « Ceux qu'il ne faut pas oublier: nos vieillards, » *Pages Documentaires*, (Octobre-Novembre 1950), pp. 47-49.

## Chapter 6

- <sup>1</sup> COSTE *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, X, 124.  
<sup>2</sup> Voir: PIERRE COSTE, « Les détenus de Saint-Lazare aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, » *Revue des Etudes Historiques*. (Juillet-Septembre 1926), p. 280.  
<sup>3</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 710.  
<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem.*  
<sup>5</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, XI, 21.  
<sup>6</sup> DU BREUL, *op. cit.*, p. 296.  
<sup>7</sup> PAULTRE, *op. cit.*, p. 73, (L'hôpital avait reçu le nom de « Petites-Maisons » à cause de sa subdivision en un grand nombre de « loges »).  
<sup>8</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 648.  
<sup>9</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres*, *op. cit.*, XIII, 596.  
<sup>10</sup> LEON CAHEN, *Le Grand Bureau des Pauvres de Paris au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Paris: Georges Bellais, 1904), p. 3.  
<sup>11</sup> JEAN-BAPTISTE JAILLOT, *Recherches critiques historiques sur la ville de Paris*, (Paris: 1775), V, 85.  
<sup>12</sup> DU BREUL, *op. cit.*, p. 296.  
<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.  
<sup>14</sup> HENRY C. BURDETTE, *Hospitals and Asylums of the World*, (London: J. Churchill, 1891), I, 82.  
<sup>15</sup> JACQUES VIÉ, *Les aliénés et les correctionnaires à Saint-Lazare au XVII<sup>e</sup> et au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, (Paris: Saint-Amand, 1930), p. 52.  
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.  
<sup>17</sup> LAIGNEL-LAVASTINE et J. VIÉ, « La vie médicale de saint Vincent de Paul, » *Revue des Etudes Historiques*, (1930), p. 129.

- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- <sup>19</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 126.
- <sup>20</sup> A. C. M. *Extraits du Procès de Béatification de Vincent de Paul*, p. 140.
- <sup>21</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 454.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 428.
- <sup>23</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 114.
- <sup>24</sup> *Supra*, p. 207 (2).
- <sup>25</sup> CAHEN, *Le Grand Bureau des pauvres. . . op. cit.*, p. 42.
- <sup>26</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, II, 46.
- <sup>27</sup> COSTE *OEuvres, op. cit.*, VII, 185.
- <sup>28</sup> A. C. M. *Extraits du Procès. . . op. cit.*, p, 139.
- <sup>29</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, X, 584.
- <sup>30</sup> CAHEN, *Le Grand Bureau des Pauvres. . . op. cit.*, p. 47.
- <sup>31</sup> LALLEMAND, *Histoire de la Charité, op. cit.*, IV, 505.
- <sup>32</sup> *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, (1894), LIX, 51.
- <sup>33</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 290 bis.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 160.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, N<sup>o</sup> 159.
- <sup>36</sup> COSTE, *OEuvres, op. cit.*, XIII, 596.
- <sup>37</sup> A. R. B. Louise de Marillac, *Lettres*, N<sup>o</sup> 491.
- <sup>38</sup> *Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux. . . op. cit.*, II, 541.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 808.
- <sup>41</sup> *Livre d'Or des Filles de la Charité, op. cit.*, II, 29.
- <sup>42</sup> *Supra*, p. 209, (1).
- <sup>43</sup> *L'Echo de la Maison-Mère, op. cit.*, (Novembre 1952), p. 29.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibidem.*
- <sup>45</sup> ABELLY, *op. cit.*, I, 712.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

- A. R. B. pour Archives de La Rue du Bac.  
A. C. M. pour Archives de La Congrégation de La Mission.  
A. N. pour Archives Nationales.  
B. N. pour Bibliothèque Nationale.

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It is particularly appropriate that Sister Margaret Flinton's work should be offered to the English reading public a few months after the celebration of the fourth centenary of the birth of Saint Louise de Marillac. A prominent feature of those celebrations was the effort made by many to come to know more deeply this remarkable woman—a wife, a mother, a foundress, a pioneer in social assistance, a competent administrator of a host of projects for alleviating distress in the world, and a Saint. The fact that Saint Louise de Marillac was proclaimed patroness of all Christian Social Workers by Pope John XXIII in 1960, was not sufficiently known. One of the most valuable results of last year's celebration has been the emergence into clear light of this valiant woman whom Pope John Paul II has described in a letter to the Daughters of Charity as “an example to follow and one to propose to others.”

*From the Foreword by Richard McCullen, C.M.  
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new city press, new york

ISBN 1-56548-017-1