

To: All Spiritual facilitators, conference presidents and members of both boards.

From: Msgr. Sam Bianco (msgr.sambianco@yahoo.ca)

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I have taken the reflections and readings for October from the writings of Saint Louise de Marillac. There are more choices than you may have time to use in October so what you don't, use for another occasion please.

Wikipedia has a good summary of the life of Saint Louise the Marillac

Reading One from Saint Louise the Marillac

“All this, my Most Honored Father, leads me to realize how necessary it is for the rules to continue to oblige the Sisters to live poorly, simply, and humbly because I fear that if they settle into a way of life that requires great expenditures, is ostentatious and partially enclosed, they would thereby be obliged to find ways to maintain it, and so they would become a very withdrawn and inactive group, living apart from passers-by and poorly clothed people, leading some to say that this wearer-of-a-rough-headress, this Sister in name only, has no authority, rather she elicits contempt. I know that not only the Sisters but others, who are obliged to honor the designs of God for the spiritual and corporal service of the sick poor, will have a strong inclination toward this way of life which is so dangerous for continuation of the work of God, which, my Most Honored Father, your charity has so firmly sustained against all opposition.”

Reflections

Louise was a religious sister, a wife, a widow and a mother. She knew how our external appearance reflects our spirits (our interior, our hearts and souls). She knew our external appearances affect those with whom we work and serve. It is not a question of what clothes we wear but rather the relationships between the inside and the outside of our personality as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Saint Paul says, in Romans 13:14;

"instead clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ"

- a. What do our outward appearances tell us about ourselves? Not just our clothes but more importantly our facial expressions, the words we use, how we talk, walk, look at people?
- b. What did Jesus wear? What is Jesus wearing today?
- c. What are the "garments of salvation"? Isaiah 61 :10

Reading Two from Saint Louise the Marillac

“They shall remember that true Daughters of Charity must be united in order to fulfill God's expectations. Because our corrupted nature has deprived us of this perfection, and since sin separates us from our unity which is God, following the example of the Blessed Trinity, we must have but one heart and act with one mind as do the three divine Persons. We must do this in such a way that, when the Sister in charge of the sick requests the help of her Sister, the Sister who instructs the children shall readily comply. And, if the Sister in charge of the children requests assistance from the Sister in charge of the poor, she shall do likewise since both tasks are equally the business of God. Considering themselves both chosen by Divine Providence in order to act in unison, we hope never to hear the words, "That is your business, not mine."

Reflections

- a. Whose business is it anyway?
- b. How do we share, or not share, our work and responsibilities with one another and with our neighbours in need?
- c. Where in our individual lives and in the life of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has the Holy Spirit made it His business to be part of our business?
- d. Busyness; business; busy bodies?

Reading Three from Saint Louise the Marillac

LETTER TO SISTER JULIENNE LORETTE

Louise expresses concern for Sister Julienne's health and advises her to exercise. She encourages the Sisters to seek opportunities to serve the sick poor in the surrounding villages. Her interest lies in making white honey, which could be used in syrups and preserves, as sugar was expensive. She is specific about the supplies that she is sending to the Sisters.

“My dear Sister,

I thank God for all the help his goodness gave our deceased Sister. I believe that, in a short time, she worked diligently to acquire the degree of holiness to which God had called her.

You are blessed to have been able to assist her. May Our Lord be your eternal recompense!

Now I beg you to slow down a bit and to look after your health. For this, I think that you need exercise. If we are to believe Sister Philippe, she would willingly undertake anything without taking time out to be sick. This is why I beg you, my dear Sister, to take turns teaching school, looking after the house, and nursing the sick in the villages. Our Sisters do this everywhere else. One of my worries about Chars is that our Sisters are not in the habit of looking for opportunities to serve the sick poor of the surrounding villages. This causes me to fear that our stay there will lead to our humiliation.

I thank you with all my heart for the beautiful, delicious apples you sent us. It seems to me that you once mentioned that you were going to make honey. Please find out if that white honey is natural, or if it can be made some way because sugar is becoming very expensive, and it could be used to make syrups and even preserves.

We are sending you a half-pound of catholicon, a pound of senna, a pound of cassia, and two and a quarter pounds of licorice. If you need anything else, let me know. Sister Marguerite will draw up an account of what you are to pay the nurses. Please let us know how the child is doing. Be sure that he is brought back to us at the time indicated. I am the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble Sister and servant.

P.S. Thank you for your kindness toward my son. He is better, thank God. Help me to thank Him for this.”

(Chars is a town in Northern France)

Reflections

It's not all work; it's a matter of white honey, sugar, catholicon (natural remedy for some diseases), senna (herbal medicine), cassia (cinnamon), licorice and apples. Louise knew the sisters needed rest, sweetness (both candy and emotionally) and practical suggestions for living.

- a. How do we get rest and recreation?
- b. How do our neighbours in need to get white honey, rest and recreation?
- c. Did Jesus eat an apple? How did Jesus rest?

Reading Four from Saint Louise the Marillac

SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT

“In 1660, while dying, Louise gave her spiritual testament to her Sisters. She stressed community in union and cordiality above all else, including service of the poor.

My dear Sisters, I continue to ask God for his blessings for you and pray that he will grant you the grace to persevere in your vocation in order to serve him in the manner he asks of you.

Take good care of the service of the poor. Above all, live together in great union and cordiality, loving one another in imitation of the union and life of Our Lord.

Pray earnestly to the Blessed Virgin, that she may be your only Mother.”

Reflections

- a. In addition to your will, if you have one, or don't, write out (privately) the words you would like to leave with family and friends before you go to your permanent home with Jesus. If you choose you can share your words.
- b. What were Jesus' last words and his will and testament?