

# Spiritual Reflections for the month of April 2024

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

## God's presence

From the New Testament and writings of St. Vincent de Paul:

*O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Romans 11:33)*

Writing in 1650 to a fellow priest (Gerald Bryan), who had served the poor in the Irish city of Limerick and then endured a plague there, St. Vincent de Paul commented: "What do we know of what God means to do? . . . Oh, my God, how inscrutable are your judgements! At the end of one of the most fruitful and necessary missions we have ever seen, You have dried up the current of Your mercies on this penitent city to lay Your hand still more heavily upon it by . . . the scourge of sickness. . . Yet it is only to reap a harvest of well-prepared souls and gather the good grain into Your eternal granaries. Lord, we adore Your guidance and governance."<sup>1</sup>

## Question:

Whether or not one agrees with St. Vincent's understanding of this sad event, one can still find food for thought in his commendation of God's presence amid suffering. Have you been in a situation where God felt absent? Can you in some sense reconcile your feelings with an understanding that God is omnipresent and all powerful?

- *Vincentian Alex Damm, St. Jerome Conference, Peel North*

---

<sup>1</sup> From The Letters of St. Vincent de Paul, ed. and trans. Joseph Leonard, with an introduction by Henri Bremond (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1937), 350.

## **Preparing for the Feast of Saint Louise de Marillac - May 9**

**Gospel:** (Matthew 25: 31-46)

The King will say to those on his right hand, “Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me...I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.”

### **Reflection:**

Louise de Marillac, (1591-1660), married Antoine LeGras and they had a son whom they named Michel, but at the age of 34 she became a widow. Vincent de Paul became her spiritual director and under his guidance she began caring for the poor and visiting the Confraternities of Charity. Vincent and Louise co-founded the Company of the Daughters of Charity, and dedicated them to serve the poor with humility, simplicity and charity. In 1960, Pope John XXIII proclaimed Louise the patron saint of all Christian social workers.

### **Meditation:**

“Above all, be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we much love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care.” - St. Louise de Marillac- (Gibson and Kneaves, *Praying with Louise*, p. 72)

Discussion: Share the ways that you see persons in need being served today in the spirit of Louise - in gentleness... loving them tenderly and respecting them deeply?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Compassionate Christ, Louise ministered to the needs of your people, give us courage to walk in her footsteps.  
Suffering played a painful part in Louise’s growth in holiness, give us eyes of faith to see Your presence in our suffering.  
Louise’s heart was fashioned through her friendship with Vincent, give us friends whose love transforms our hearts to love you more.

You inspired Louise with a great love for persons in need and the abandoned, grant us the grace to serve those whose lives touch ours with the same spirit of love and courage. May the Vincentian Family continue to grow and multiply throughout the world, so that persons in need will know God’s love in a tangible way. Amen

*- From SSVP Scotland*