

ST. LOUISE'S DEVOTION
TO THE IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION



Louise's spirituality was rooted in the Incarnation of Jesus. She meditated on this mystery from various aspects. Louise saw Mary's Immaculate Conception as a preparation for this great mystery and, uniting herself with Mary, meditated on Jesus in Mary's womb.¹



Louise often spoke of the Immaculate Conception, prayed to Mary as the Immaculate Conception, and inculcated this devotion within her Sisters.¹



Given Louise's strong devotion to, and promotion of, the Immaculate Conception it is not surprising that two hundred years later Mary should announce herself in this manner to one of Louise's Daughters.¹

(When Mary appeared to Saint Catherine Labouré at the Motherhouse, Rue du Bac, Paris, in 1830, she identified herself as the Immaculate Conception.)



There is no doubt that our founders, Sts. Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, had an admirable devotion to the Immaculate Conception at a time when theologians were still disputing this extraordinary privilege that God had bestowed on Mary. [St. Louise in particular] repeatedly revealed, in word and in deed, her veneration of Mary Immaculate who had been enriched and adorned by God with many graces and privileges as a result of being chosen to be the Mother of God.³



More specifically, Louise viewed Mary's Immaculate Conception as being inseparable from her divine motherhood (a mystery related to the action of the Blessed Trinity) as well as being inseparable from Mary's role as co-redeemer and dispenser of all graces and the mystery of her Assumption into heaven.³



According to an account that we find in a letter that Louise wrote to Vincent (March 1646) we are told that Louise de Marillac liked to pray a little chaplet that was composed of twelve beads.³



"The little chaplet is the devotion for which I asked permission of your Charity three years ago as a personal devotion. I have in a small box a quantity of these little chaplets, along with some thoughts on this devotion written on a piece of paper, which with your permission, I wish to leave to all our sisters after my death. Not one of them knows it. It honors the hidden life of Our Lord in his state of imprisonment in the womb of the Blessed Virgin and congratulates her on her happiness during those nine months."³

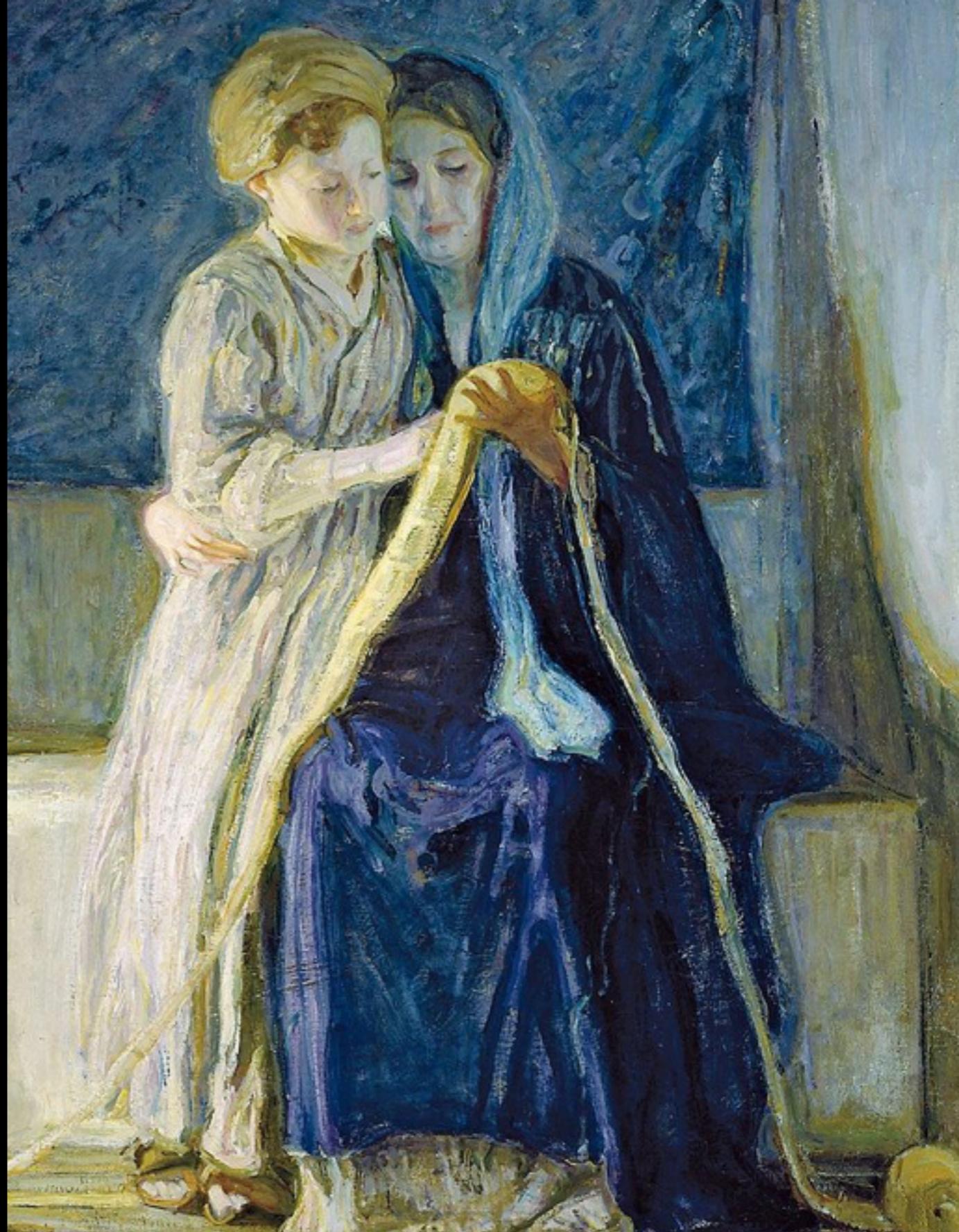


“The three small beads hail her under her beautiful titles of Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, and Spouse of the Holy Spirit. That is the main thought behind the devotion. [...] By means of this little exercise I intend to ask God, through the Incarnation of His Son and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, for the purity necessary for the Company of the Sisters of Charity and for the steadfastness of this Company in keeping with His good pleasure.” (SWLM:140 [L.301b])³



With those words Louise responded to her spiritual director who wanted to know about her practice of prayer.

Gifted with an exquisite feminine sensitivity Louise was unable to conceal her sentiments as a mother. Her son, Michel who caused her much suffering, led her to think about Mary as a mother of mercy and as a holy mother.³



HENRY OSSAWA TANNER - CHRIST AND HIS MOTHER STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES (C.1909)

At about the same time, [St. Louise] made her famous offering to the Virgin: "Most Holy Virgin, deign to take my son and me into your care. Welcome the choice I make of you as our protectress. Accept my vows and my prayers as well as my heart which I give entirely to you so as to glorify God for the choice He made of you to be the Mother of His Son. Because of this divine action, your conception was immaculate since the Father applied to you the anticipated merit of the death of Jesus Christ." (SWLM:695 [A.4])³



We find Mary here as we will always find her in Louise de Marillac's writings, as the Mother of God, intimately united to her son in the accomplishment of the divine plan. Louise's reflections on the role of Mary in the redemption caused her to see, well before any definition of the dogma, the importance of the Immaculate Conception.²



1. LaFleur, Kathryn S.P. (1998) "A Study in the Spirituality of Louise de Marillac: As Reflective of the French School of Spirituality," Vincentian Heritage Journal: Vol. 19: Iss. 2, Article 5.

[Link to article](#)

2. Sullivan, Louise D.C. (1991) "The Spirituality of Louise de Marillac: Moved by the Spirit to Charity," Vincentian Heritage Journal: Vol. 12: Iss. 2, Article 5.

[Link to Article](#)

3. Antonio Orcajo, CM. The Prayer: "Most Holy Virgin, I believe and confess"
To Saint Louise de Marillac on the 351st anniversary of her death March 15th 1660

[Link to article](#)