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To value who she was and what Louise did, we will have to place ourselves in her time, the seventeenth century, where most women could neither read nor write and in the world of men they were not taken into account at all. Her destiny was to marry or enter the convent.

When St. Vincent de Paul met Louise de Marillac in late 1624 Louise was 34 years old, with an 11-year-old son and a sick and dying husband.

Mr. Vincent, a great expert of the human soul and psychology, saw Louise as a very intelligent, pious but very disoriented woman. As her confessor he helped her, with kindness and patience, to forget herself, simplify her life of prayer, and look at the poor.

Louise entrusted herself to that simple priest full of love for Jesus Christ and because she gradually became involved in the service to the poor, the depression and sadness that dominated her was disappearing.

Four years later St. Vincent sees that Louise is ready to leave the house and entrusts her with the supervision, correction and animation of the Confraternities of Charity that he had founded in Chatillon in 1617 and that by those years they had spread throughout France. However, not all of them worked properly.

At 38 years old, Louise changes her life and sets out on difficult and distant roads, whether on stagecoaches, on foot or even on horseback.

When she reached every town Louise gathered the ladies. She talked to them, observed their work, examined the accounts, visited the poor, was interested in the functioning of the local schools and when she returned to Paris she wrote a detailed report for Mr. Vincent.

For six more years, Louise continued to visit all the Charities. There were two visits that provide important data to learn more about Louise's personality: Beauvais and Liancourt

Louise visited Beauvois and ran into serious problems. The Charity had been founded a few years earlier but they lacked regulations. Louise wrote one and handed it over to the ladies, subsequently watching for them to comply.

This tells us about a smart, determined and confident Louise when she has to decide something about Charities.

In Liancourt the problems were different. St. Vincent conceived the Charities as a personal service that the ladies must do for the poor by visiting and caring for them in their own homes. The home visit, as it is to this day, was essential for spiritual and material attention.



However, the Marquise de Liancourt intended to create a house-hospital where services were provided.

St. Vincent refused this and Louise to resolve the conflict suggested hiring two people she called "Guardians of the Poor" to watch over and care for the sick and dying who were taken to the hospital. While the ladies would take food and medicine to people in their homes at least twice a week. In this way the Ladies would still do the home visits and on the other hand the Marquise was satisfied with her idea of having a hospital.

Louise knew how to relate perfectly well to both the simple women of the towns and the aristocratic and wealthy women of the cities. They all loved Louise, asked for advice even in personal matters, and admired her not only for her intelligence and gift with people but for her holiness and great human and spiritual qualities.

St. Vincent thanked God for being able to count as a collaborator a woman as admirable as Louise de Marillac, Mademoiselle Le Gras, as he always called her, because thanks to her the Confraternities worked exemplarily and remained faithful to the charism of St. Vincent de Paul.

