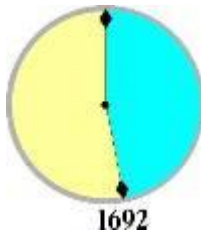


2. EVENT: His Youth, influence from his environment



- **DATE:** 1673-1700
- **PLACE:** Montfort, La Bachelleraie, the Jesuit College in Rennes, the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris
- **VALUE:** my roots



- **THE STORY:**

Every human being is marked by his or her family background and by the social milieu where he or she starts out in life. Louis Marie was no exception.

The region where Louis Marie was born had kept the ancient Breton faith, a faith robust as the granite of its earth. Louis Marie would en flesh this vigorous temperament. Much has been made of the faults of his father, Jean-Baptiste Grignon; and he was not beyond reproach: his outbursts of anger were sometimes terrible, his greed for gain real. He had titles, but little money: he had to feed his numerous children. His job as an advocate brought him more honour than money.

From this we can understand how his domestic troubles might have had an influence on the temperament of this man who was already given to violent reactions. Moreover, Jean-Baptiste Grignon was a convinced Christian, raising his family in the fear of God, concerned with his temporal future while not forgetting the eternal life to come.

Louis Marie's mother was the daughter of a municipal magistrate of Rennes, and the sister of three priests: Alain, Gilles and Pierre. Humble, quiet, she occupied herself with the education of her children with admirable devotedness that persisted through periods of tears during her husband's bouts of anger. Louis Marie, still quite young, did all he could to console her and, later, would praise her patience, which would sometimes have had to be very great so as to maintain peace in the household.

We can understand that Louis Marie was very close to his mother. Among his brothers and sisters, he had one favourite, Guyonne-Jeanne, seven years younger than himself, with whom he always maintained a very special relationship. He wanted to make her a saint.

We should note that his uncle Alain Robert, for whom he had great esteem, had a great influence on him. At the Jesuit College in Rennes, he was positively influenced by Father Gilbert, a regent and professor, and Father Descartes, his spiritual director. M. Julien Bellier passed on to him, for life, his love of the poor, the sick and the wretched of all kinds. His love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin, already quite remarkable even from his infancy, were confirmed and nourished during the years of his studying with the Jesuits, for whom this aspect of the faith was particularly of concern.

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:**

Letter to Fr. Alain Robert, 20 September 1694

May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!

It was with great pleasure that I received your letter, coming as it did from one who has great affection for me.

Your letter brought me news of a death and in return I too have to tell you of a death. It is that of Fr. de la Barmondière, my superior and director, who has done so much for me here. He was buried last Sunday, mourned by the whole parish and by everyone who knew him. He lived a saintly life and died a holy death. It was he who founded the seminary here and had the kindness to receive me for nothing. I do not know yet how things will go, whether I shall stay or leave, as his will has not yet been made known. Whatever happens I shall not be worried. I have a Father in heaven who will never fail me. He brought me here, he has kept me here until now and he will continue to treat me with his usual kindness.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:**

Luke 2:46-52

[At the age of twelve, Jesus went with his parents on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Without their knowing, he stayed there] It happened that, three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him

were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, ‘My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.’ He replied, ‘Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand what he meant. He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and with people.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- In my personal history (family, educators), who has helped me the most to grow as a human being, and as a Christian?
- Who might have harmed my growth? Have I forgiven them?
- What has enabled me to overcome the deficiencies in ‘my human roots’?
- What is the most beautiful heritage I have received from people who accompanied me in my youth?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us give thanks to God for those people who have contributed to the formation of the person I am today, saying: For everything that has nourished me, thank you, Lord.

For my father and mother, who gave me life and helped me to grow,

For other people among my relations whose presence has meant much to me,

For my teachers and those who formed me, nourished me with their knowledge and their wisdom,

For all those who enabled me to overcome difficulties in the course of my life,

For those people that I have been able to help and walk with on their journey,

Lord, you are the source of all fatherhood. We give you thanks for the people who enabled us to come to birth and to grow. Share with me your generosity, that I may always be ready to help those who ask for my aid. Amen.

● **SYMBOL:** cf. the symbol above: the roots that nourish the plant, the soil in which it grows...

● **COMMITMENT**

- to write down the names of all those significant people who have given me roots; and to give thanks for them.

