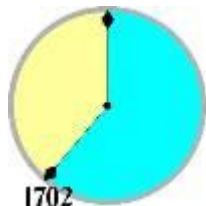


7. EVENT: Marie-Louise moving to the General Hospital

- **DATE:** 1702?
- **PLACE:** Poitiers
- **VALUE:** radical vocation; vocation involving difficult choices
- **THE STORY**



Which religious house should Marie-Louise enter to realise her religious vocation? Challenged one

day by Marie-Louise, Father de Montfort gazes for a long time at this young woman who does not wish to postpone her gift to God. Smiling and in an offhand manner, he says

the words in such a way as to put no constraint on her nor violate her liberty: “Well, then, go and live in the hospital.”

At that point, Marie Louise does not attach much importance to the remark, for it seems unthinkable. But when she goes home, the real meaning of the words dawns on her and takes hold of her. She understands all that Montfort has intended by this invitation. The more she thinks about it, the more she is persuaded that God has made known his will to her, and a great peace descends on her spirit regarding her vocation. Without delay, she goes off to find Father de Montfort at the hospital: “I have thought for several days about what you said to me. I want to come to live among the poor.”

But the response of the hospital administrators that the Bishop passes on to her is negative: they already have too many governesses, and do not want one more! Without turning a hair, she answers the Bishop: “Monseigneur, these gentlemen are not prepared to accept me as a governess; perhaps they will not refuse to admit me as one of the poor.” Now this answer gives the Bishop a clear indication of the stature of the young woman before him. So without further objection, he writes a letter requesting the administrators of the hospital to accept her. Their surprise is extreme. So they try to disguise the entrance of Marie Louise as a matter of convenience: they create a prestigious post specially for her—a sort of sub-superiorship. But Father de Montfort has other plans for her: he demands that she come to live in his small community of Wisdom, and when the

head of the hospital asks that she be made at least the superior of the group, he replies with firmness and to her astonishment: “Oh, no, Madame, first she must learn to obey.”

So Marie-Louise enters tranquilly into the little group of the “Daughters of Wisdom”, and follows the rule, point by point, exactly as they do. Having refused the oft-repeated requests of the Superior to eat with the governesses, she eats willingly and with all the hearty appetite of a nineteen-year-old the black bread and soup of the poor. Every morning, with the permission of Father de Montfort, she receives the Eucharist, her face shining with serenity, for all the uncertainty of the past long months has now been resolved. *(After Papásogli)*

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:**

Hymn 139, 2. 4. 7. 15

To serve God: what illustrious grandeur, Greater than an emperor’s!
Lord, I am not worthy To be your servant,
But you will it, great Master. I will then try to be one,
Telling the whole universe I love you and serve you.
I serve God when I adore Him “In spirit and in truth;”
To do so, I beg The help of His goodness
For his grace is necessary Both to will and to do it.
I serve God with my whole heart, It is my glory and my joy.
As soon as I awake I raise my heart to God.
Sleeping or waking, Lord, I am all yours;
Here I am, ready to do Everything to please you.
I serve God with my whole heart, It is my glory and my joy.
I read, I write or pray, I work steadily,
Spending my life for God Without wasting a single moment.
Time is so precious And cannot be reclaimed!
I serve God with my whole heart, It is my glory and my joy.

Original Rule of the Daughters of Wisdom, 128-129

They [the Daughters of Wisdom] endeavour to be both kind and firm towards the poor. They are charitable, bearing with them and excusing them in their frailties, ignorance, defects of body and mind, and even in their sins. (...) They render the poor every service within their power, both spiritual and corporal, becoming all things to all men and even to the least

among them, convinced that the first among themselves is not the richest, the most exalted and the wisest, but the one who believes and places herself the last of all.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE: John 1:35-39**

The next day as John [the Baptist] stood in the same area with two of his disciples, Jesus went past. John looked towards him and said, ‘Look, there is the lamb of God.’ And the two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, ‘What do you want?’ They answered, ‘Rabbi’ -- which means Teacher-- ‘where do you live?’ He replied, ‘Come and see’; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

● **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?
- What has guided me, enlightened me, in the choice of my vocation in life, whether it be the religious life, marriage or celibacy?
- Like Marie-Louise, I want to walk in the footsteps of Montfort. What is it that draws me most of all to Montfort?
- What choices have I had to make to follow Montfort?
- What has helped me—and helps me more today—to discern the will of the Lord in my life?
-

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

By our baptism, Jesus calls us to follow him. Let us thank him for this call and ask him to help us to be faithful.

Lord Jesus, you said to me one day: “Come, follow me.”

For this call that gives meaning and fullness to my life, all praise to you.

Lord, you said: “If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, let him take up his cross everyday and follow me.” You know my weakness. So that I may be faithful to your call, give me the strength of the Spirit.

Lord, you said: “I do not call you servants any more; I call

you friends.” For this wonderful gift of your friendship, all praise to you.

Lord, you prayed: “Father, may they all be one as we are one.” That we might contribute by our words and actions to helping one another to follow in your footsteps, give us the peace of the Spirit.

Lord Jesus, today you are still calling men and women to follow you. That we might help them to hear your call and follow you, make us true witnesses.

- **SYMBOL:** An apron

- **COMMITMENT**

- I pray to Marie-Louise, asking her to help me to follow Christ ‘in the footsteps of Montfort’. I ask her to help me in a particular situation...

