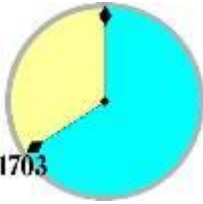


8. EVENT: Stay in the Rue du Pot de Fer



- **DATE** : 1703 Summer-Autumn
- **PLACE** : Paris
- **VALUE** : Spiritual deprivation, desert, great desire
- **THE STORY** :



In the Spring of 1703. Louis Marie resigned as chaplain to the General Hospital in Poitiers, and undertook a similar ministry at the Salpêtrière in Paris. After four or five months of devotion in this other miserable hell, “one evening he found his dismissal at his place at table.” He then sought refuge under a staircase in a miserable hovel in the Rue du Pot de Fer, near Saint-Sulpice. There he lived in total material abandonment, but he was the happy neighbour of the Jesuit novitiate, where he met up again with Father Descartes, who had been his director in Rennes, one of the few people and friends who did not abandon him at this moment.

He wrote: “My only friend here is God. Those friends I once had in Paris have deserted me.” This was truly a desert experience for Louis Marie. His short life so far as a priest seemed to him to have been a failure. The future seemed closed to his deepest desires. All sorts of rumours were going about regarding him, to which his former fellow-students and teachers seemed to be paying attention. The Sulpicians no longer wanted to be seen with the student of whom they had once been so proud. Even his spiritual director, M. Leschassier, openly rejected him, even though what he said of him is a testimony that Louis Marie was truly guided by the Spirit. The young priest no longer knew what to think, nor how to deal with these reactions, so ambiguous and contradictory, coming from a man in whom he had total confidence.

M. Blain reports that Louis Marie, born with an attraction for the tasks of the apostolic life, was now asking himself whether he should not forbid himself, or at least suspend for a time, the carrying out of his ministry. Reduced to the most abject poverty, both in the spiritual and material sense, Louis Marie felt himself graced with an absolute thirst for God. He was completely filled with a powerful call to contemplate Wisdom alone. “God,” says Blain, “made up for his poverty, his humiliations and

sufferings by granting him the grace of communicating with Him so intimately and so frequently that the servant of God spent the greater part of his days and nights in prayer.”

Thus sunk in prayer, thirsting for God, he attained the heights of that elevation of soul that the theologians call an intimate union with God, ecstatic and transforming. To emphasise this transformation, he gave up his own family name, Grignon, forever: henceforth he would use only the name of the village where God, by Baptism, had chosen him for Himself: Montfort.

From this desert, Louis Marie came out with Wisdom dwelling within him. For sure, he would still have to make discernments, but they would be regarding the way he was to fulfil his mission.

● FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:

LETTER 16

[To Marie-Louise Trichet, 24 October 1703?]

24th October 1703

My dear daughter,

May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!

Please do not think that the distance between us and my apparent silence mean that I have forgotten your charity towards me and the charity I owe you. Your letter tells me that your wishes are just as strong and eager and as persistent as ever. This is a sure sign that they are from God. So you must put your trust in God. Be sure of this, that you will obtain from him even more than you think. Heaven and earth would pass away before God would break his promises and allow anyone who hoped in him to be frustrated in their hopes.

I feel that you are still asking God that by crosses, humiliations and poverty I may acquire divine Wisdom. Be brave, my dear daughter, be brave. I am grateful to you; I feel the effects of your prayers for I am infinitely more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever. Both men and demons in this great city of Paris are waging against me a war that I find sweet and welcome. Let them slander me, scoff at me, destroy my good name, put me into prison; these are precious gifts, tasty morsels, great and wonderful things. They form the accoutrements and retinue of divine Wisdom which he brings into the lives of those in whom he dwells. When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will Wisdom come to live in me? When shall I be sufficiently equipped to serve as a place of rest for Wisdom in a world where he is rejected and without a

home?

My dear child in Jesus Christ, do not fail to reply to my requests and fulfil my wishes. You can do it, yes, you can do it, along with some of your chosen friends. Nothing can resist your prayers. Even God himself, great though he be, cannot resist. Fortunately for us, he has shown that he can be moved by a lively faith and a firm hope. So pray, entreat God, plead for me to obtain divine Wisdom. You will obtain it completely for me; of this I am quite convinced.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Matthew 6:19-21; 13:44*)

Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too.

The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Write down “the story of my desire”: what I most desired at 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years old... And today?
- Montfort and Marie-Louise united the strength of their desires. With whom might I unite my own desire, so that it might grow?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us listen to Montfort and ask the Lord to renew in us the desire for Wisdom.

- *“So you must put your trust in God. Be sure of this, that you will obtain from him even more than you think.”*

Holy Father de Montfort, share with us your complete confidence in God our Father.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

- *“I am infinitely more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever. ... Let them slander me, scoff at me, destroy my good name, put me into prison; these are precious gifts.”*

Holy Father de Montfort, help us to discover the mysterious fruitfulness of our crosses.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

- *“When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will Wisdom come to live in me?”*

Holy Father de Montfort, plant in our hearts an ardent desire for Christ, Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

- *“I feel that you are still asking God that ... I may acquire divine Wisdom ... Nothing can resist your prayers. Even God himself, great though he be, cannot resist ... So pray, entreat God, plead for me to obtain divine Wisdom. You will obtain it completely for me; of this I am quite convinced.”*

Holy Father de Montfort, teach us how to support one another by fraternal prayer.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

● **SYMBOL:** An empty bowl.

● **COMMITMENT**

- I make for myself a “Rue du Pot de Fer” in my life: a moment, a place of solitude, where I can encounter myself, and encounter God, regularly.

