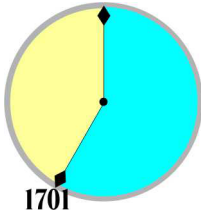


6. EVENT: Encounter with Marie-Louise

- **DATE:** 1701, November
- **PLACE:** Poitiers
- **VALUE:** friendship that “walks with” and helps growth
- **THE STORY**



One day, Marie-Louise Trichet saw her sister Elizabeth coming home full of enthusiasm and very excited: “Oh, Marie-Louise! If you only knew what a sermon I have just heard; no, I have never heard anything so moving. The preacher was a saint!” While Elizabeth was looking for words to

fully express her feelings, Marie-Louise suddenly made a decision for herself: she would go and ask this priest to take charge of her spiritual direction.

This strong, clear-cut, sudden resolution was to change the whole course of Marie-Louise’s life. The next day she went to the church where Father de Montfort was hearing confessions. Marie-Louise waited her turn and when it came she was surprised by the first words addressed to her: “Who sent you here, my daughter?” “My sister,” she replied in astonishment. “Oh, no, my daughter, it was not your sister; it was the Blessed Virgin.”

This meeting with the young penitent lost in the anonymous queue of souls seeking the hospital priest, was a significant date in the life of Father de Montfort. Here were two young people who were resolute and open to anything, two individuals capable of obstinate perseverance, two characters quite unlike one another, but wonderfully suited for mutual collaboration. To the impetuous and unquenchable temperament of Father de Montfort, with his hidden torments, there corresponds the refined and solid equilibrium of Marie-Louise, with her natural modesty. Her peaceful openness and availability provide a perfect foil for the creative genius of Louis Marie, his constructive imagination and his courage in the face of the new. She is the fertile soil ready to receive God’s word in abundance, she will appear as a partner who is reflective and infinitely available in the face of the “foolishness” of the hospital priest. (Papásogli)

● FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:

Letter 16 to Marie Louise (24 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. (...)

I feel that you are still asking God that by crosses, humiliations and poverty, the poor sinner I am 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 amiable. Let them slander me, scoff at me, destroy my good name. (...) They form the accoutrements and retinue of divine Wisdom which she brings into the lives of those in whom she dwells. When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will She come to live in me? (...)

My dear child in Jesus, do not fail to reply to my requests and so, 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 cannot resist.

Dialogue!

Marie-Louise said to Montfort: “You work a lot to help so many young ladies enter into a congregation, and to present their vocation to the bishop. I know quite many who became nuns through your help. You have in mind everyone but me! Don’t you know how I reject worldly values? Why don’t you help me to become a religious sister, like you did for so many others?”

Montfort answered: “You will be a religious, my daughter, you will be!”

(**Besnard**: *Life of Sister Marie-Louise de Jésus*, 21-28)

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:**

Ben Sirach 6:6-10; 14-17

Let your acquaintances be many, but for advisers choose one out of a thousand. If you want to make a friend, take him on trial, and do not be in a hurry to trust him; for one kind of friend is so only when it suits him but will not stand by you in your day of trouble. Another kind of friend will fall out with you and to your dismay make your quarrel public, and a third kind of friend will share your table, but not stand by you in your day of trouble.

A loyal friend is a powerful defence: whoever finds one has indeed found a treasure. A loyal friend is something beyond price, there is no measuring his worth. A loyal friend is the elixir of life, and those who fear the Lord will find one. Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends, for as a person is, so is his friend too.

John 11, 1-45

There was a man named Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Mary and Martha. These sent a message to Jesus: «Lord, the man you love is ill.» Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. But, even though he knew Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was for two more days. Then, he said to his disciples: ‘Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let

us go to him.' (...)

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went to meet him and said to him: 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that God will grant whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' (...) She then went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.' Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. As soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' (...)

Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man. Could he not have prevented this man's death?' Sighing again, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day since he died.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took the stone away. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I myself knew that you hear me always, but I speak for the sake of all these who are standing around me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me. When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with strips of material, and a cloth over his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.' Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what he did, believed in him.

● **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 friendships in my life have brought me growth?
- How have friends helped me to grow as a human being, as a Christian, as a religious?
- Have I ever sensed that certain friendships move me further from my commitment as a Christian or as a religious? How have I reacted to this?
- How have I myself helped others to grow through my friendship?
-

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Thinking of the friendships we have experienced throughout our lives, let us give thanks to the Lord...

For the friends with whom I have laughed and cried, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have shared with me their secrets and their dreams, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have opened to me their doors and their hearts

when I have been alone, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have had the frankness to confront me with my mistakes and my pettiness, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have been my sun in my darkest days, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who revealed your face to me by their welcome and their faithfulness, thank you, Lord.

For the friends whom I have been able to help grow as human beings and as Christians, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have supported me in my life commitment, thank you, Lord.

Lord, who loved to share the table and the presence of your friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary, teach us to appreciate the friends who walk with us, to welcome them as a gift that you give us and a call to be generous and faithful towards them. Amen.

- **SYMBOL:**

Two pairs of sandals.

- **COMMITMENT**

- I take the time to communicate with a friend; I thank him for his friendship. In a personal prayer, I thank God for the friendships that have brought me growth.

