

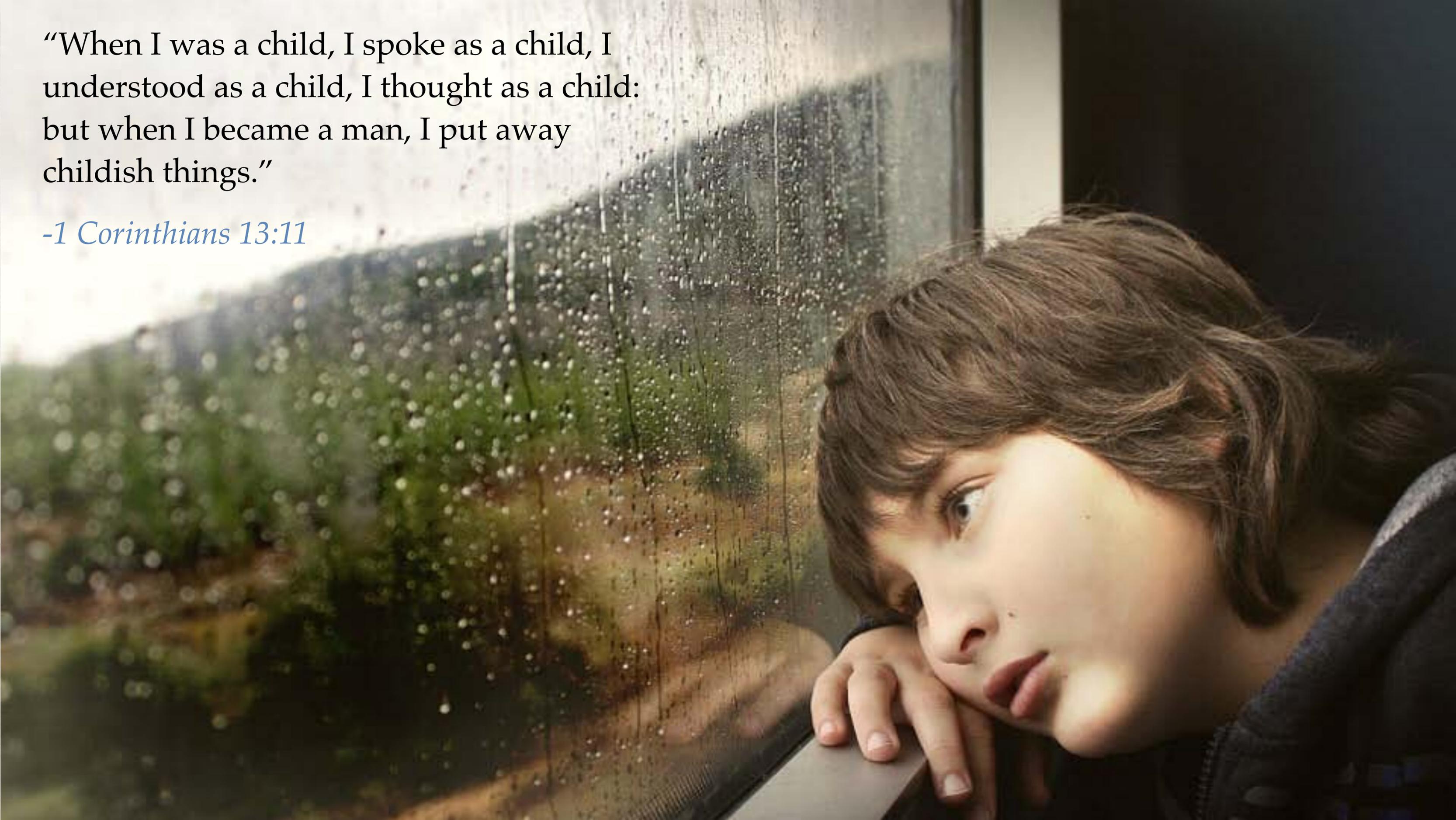


St. Louise de Marillac: a consecrated life

Adapted from an article by Sister Carmen Urrizburu, DC

“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

-1 Corinthians 13:11



Louise as a child





LOUIS DE MARILLAC COMTE DE
Metz, Toul et Verdun; et Général des armées du Roy
Beaumont Maréchal de France, Lieutenant au Gouvern^{ement} de
en Italie: estoit fils de Guillaume de Marillac. S. de

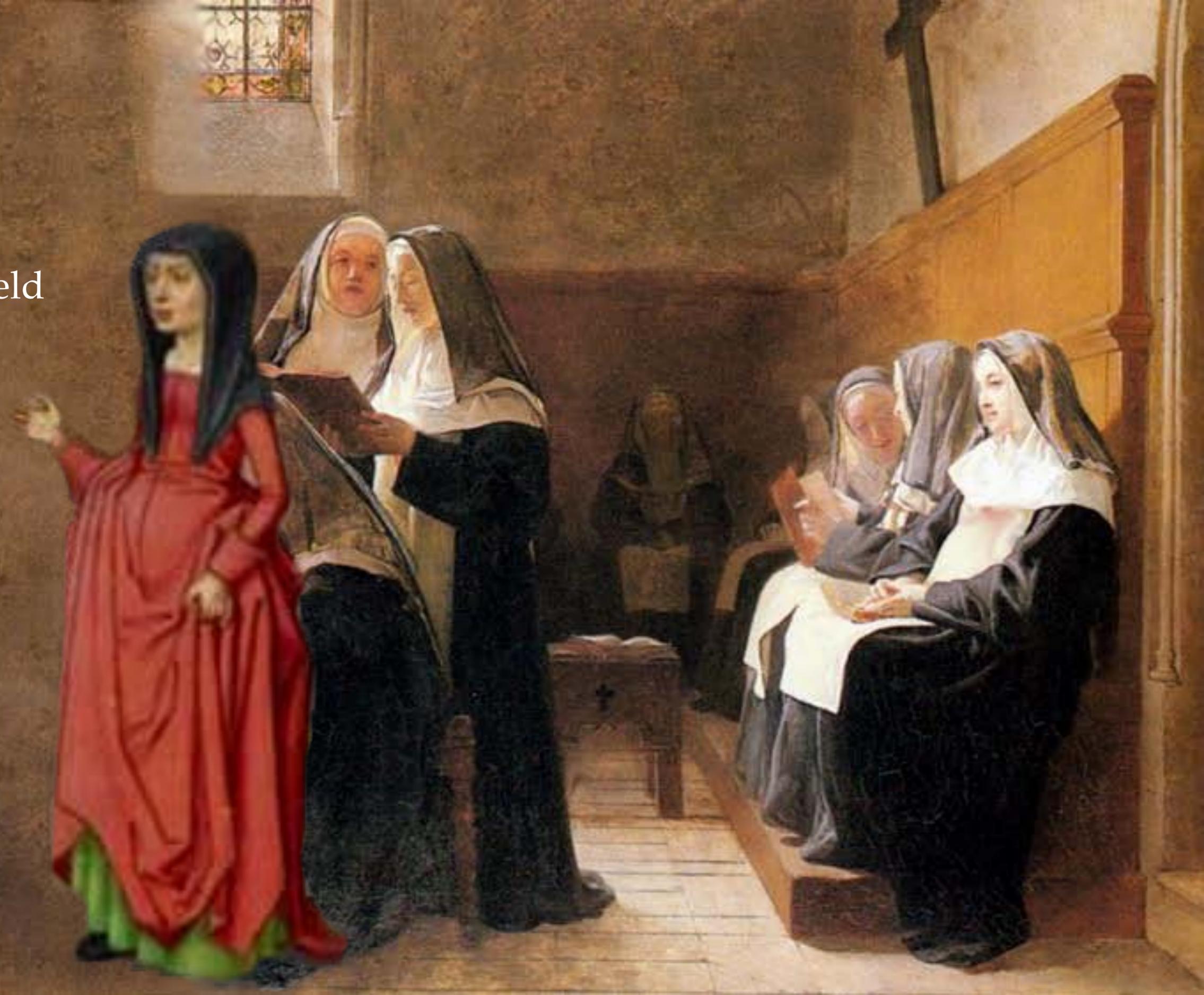
- ❖ Death of her father; Louise was placed in the royal abbey at Poissy, France
- ❖ In the midst of the Dominican nuns
- ❖ Felt a strong desire to give herself to God totally for the remainder of her life



Louise as a young woman



- ❖ Fascination for the sacred
- ❖ Monastic life - the world held no attraction for her
- ❖ Planned to become a Capuchin nun



At this stage, Louise was nourished by:

- ❖ interior movement
- ❖ reading
- ❖ meeting, conversing with spiritual writers in her social circles



Louise as a grown woman



- ❖ “I can only desire to serve God if his love draws me.”
- ❖ A dynamic, ongoing, lively attitude of fidelity.
- ❖ God is not distant, impersonal, unconcerned about the things that occur on earth. No, He is near to people, present and active in the life of every person, pleased to come among us in order to make use of us as He sees fit.
- ❖ A God who took on human flesh, who knows our secrets, who reveals His plan of life for us.



At this stage, Louise was nourished by:

- ❖ *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales
- ❖ A new interior movement
- ❖ An urgency that sprang from her heart

She was being impelled from the inside rather than being pushed from the outside.



Further transformation...



Louise wished to live as a follower of Jesus, freely and so that nothing prevented her from doing so.

She had to find the way that would enable her to do this while at the same time enabling her to live the fullness of life.

She had to let go of everything and to be detached of all those realities that might distract her or lead her astray.



At this stage, Louise was nourished by:

- ❖ the profound attraction of the call to follow Christ
- ❖ the seductive beauty of such a call
- ❖ a “great attraction for the holy humanity of Our Lord”
- ❖ “a desire to honor it in the person of the poor and of all her neighbors”
- ❖ consolation and happiness at the thought of being accepted by Jesus to live her life as his follower



FAITH

a faith that had repercussions in her daily life... a faith that allowed her to overcome various insecurities and fears

a faith that inspired her to proclaim the Gospel, and minister in such a way as to create a new and more human world... a trusting faith, something she had to work at... a confident faith that God would never fail to help her if he asked something of her which seemed to be beyond her capabilities

a living faith;
grace

an inherited
faith;
received as a
gift



CHURCH

Louise's home and parish church were points of reference... for rest and recovering her strength, for retreat and for establishing a bond with her deepest desires, at some church or convent.

Louise maintained a relationship of respect, trust, and assistance with the pastors of her parishes... always aware of belonging to the Church... would never dream of living her faith in private or saving herself by her own efforts.

She breathed, moved, dreamed and acted within the Church; her concept broadened from parish to diocesan, worldwide, the Church militant, the Church triumphant, the mystical body of Christ, the vine and the branches, the head and the members...



MOTIVATION

Motivated by:
obedience— “being good” by means of her commitment and the strength of her will (sacrifices and an ascetic life).

Motivated by:

- ❖ **thirst**; like a deer that runs quickly toward streams of water.
- ❖ **desire** to achieve true devotion
- ❖ **love**, the love poured into her heart by the Spirit



Motivated by:

reciprocity; Louise gives and God receives, and vice versa— God and creature are in a reciprocal relationship of give and take. Joy is the result.



MISSION

In her early writings Louise viewed **mission** as “serving my neighbor with great humility and gentleness” (SWLM:689 [A.1]) and “helping them to attain their eternal salvation...” (SWLM:698 [A.7])



Around 1629, encouraged by St. Vincent, Louise began to visit the Confraternities in various towns and villages. She began to state her **mission** as one of “helping my neighbor to know God.” (SWLM:705 [A.50])

With the passing of time and as she was joined by other young women who desired to serve the poor, Louise began to see her broader **mission** as “serving the poor and guiding and assisting our Sisters.” (SWLM:769 [A.75])



CONSECRATION

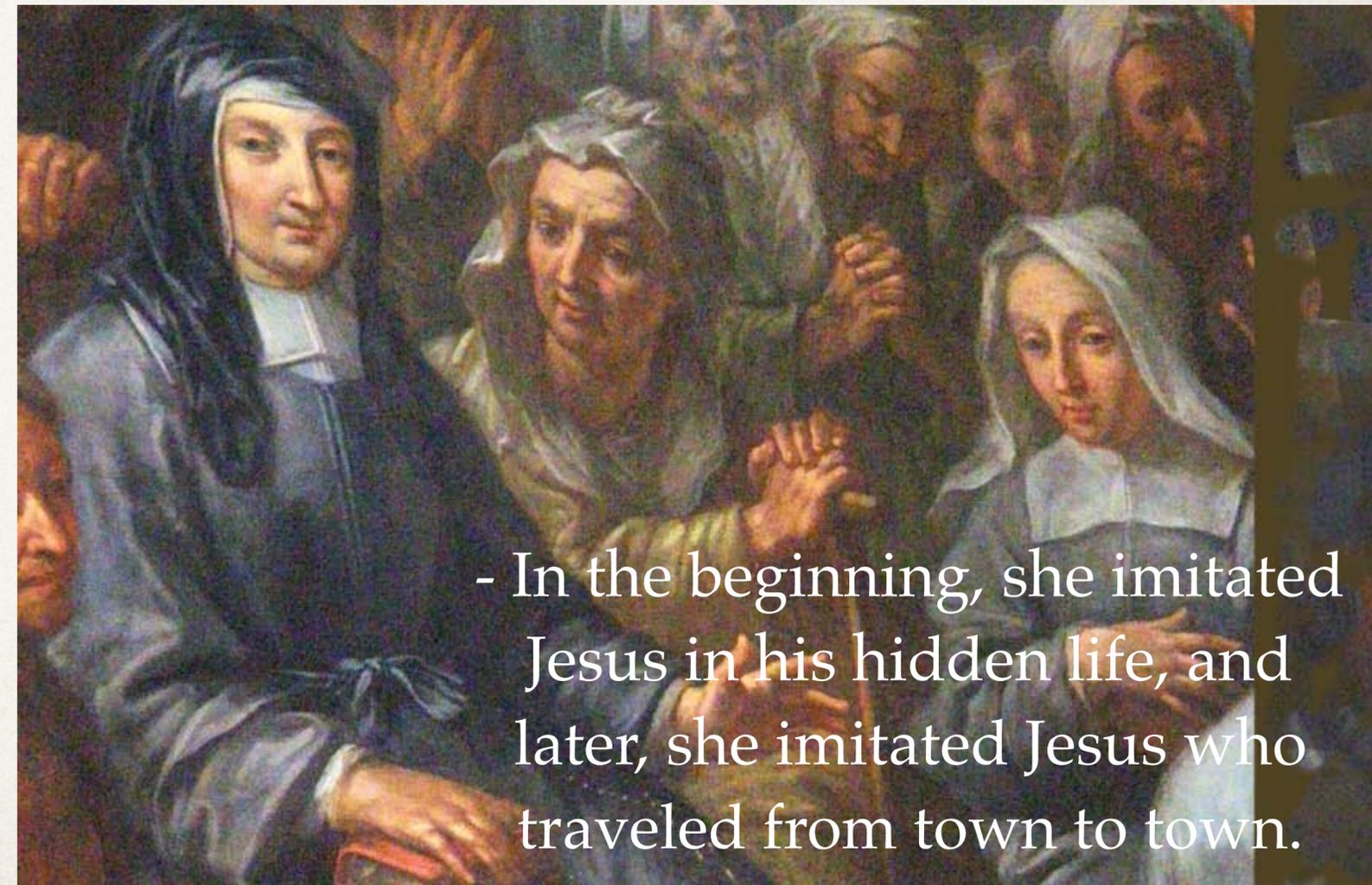
What “consecration” looked like: silence and daily mental prayer, liturgical worship and community life, an ascetic life and interior devoutness, vows and a commitment to serve others.



What “consecration” looked like:
She still practiced acts of piety and mortification, but now out of attraction, love, and gratitude; helping her to remain alert and to keep her desire alive, to cultivate and intensify the giving of herself to God, not as empty actions that had to be fulfilled.

What “consecration” looked like:

- walking in the footsteps of the Master
- serving God in the person of the poor



- In the beginning, she imitated Jesus in his hidden life, and later, she imitated Jesus who traveled from town to town.

Premise

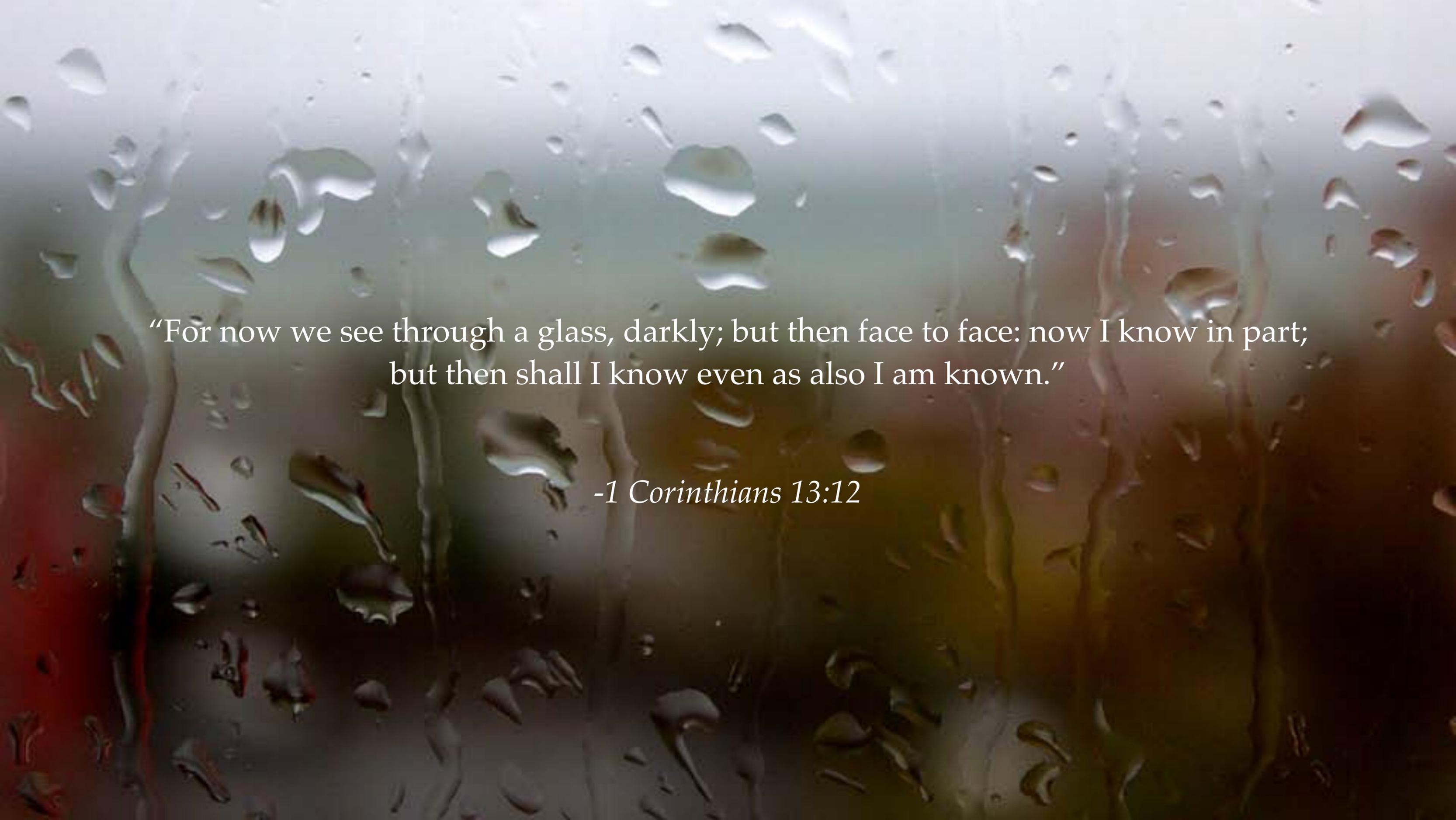
Because Jesus took our misery upon Himself, it is only reasonable that we should follow Him and imitate His life; to make our lives a continuation of His.

Action

Louise writes that charity is something Jesus taught us “to make up for our powerlessness to render any service to his person... This touched my heart very particularly and intimately.”

Joy

Finally, there was a joy in realizing that God wanted her to help her neighbor come to a deeper knowledge of God...a ministry of love on behalf of her neighbor.



“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part;
but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

-1 Corinthians 13:12

Louise and the nuptial character of consecration

- ❖ The Church is the spouse of Christ.
- ❖ Christ purifies the Church through baptism to make her his bride.
- ❖ A story of love unfolds at the time of our baptism; there is a consent to enter into marriage.
- ❖ We should look upon Jesus as our spouse.
- ❖ We must imitate Jesus as a spouse tries to resemble her husband.
- ❖ We are the faithful spouses of Jesus and should value purity in our personal lives.
- ❖ We should leave everything to follow our Spouse.
- ❖ We must bear with the difficulties we might encounter.
- ❖ Our spouse is the source of an abundance of love and joy.
- ❖ Just as in marriage, two persons give themselves to each other, respect each other's freedom, give mutual consent.
- ❖ God wants to come to us and we can not refuse Him entrance; we must acquiesce to Him.



Mission is rooted in baptismal consecration

Every baptized person should feel compelled to proclaim the fact that Christ lives and saves us: Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).

As a result of her encounter with St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise began to become more aware of her abilities as an evangelizer, and the horizons of her mission were broadened.



M^{rs}. CH. LETAÏLLE, BOUMARD FILS, Edit. pontif. PARIS

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LA CHARITÉ

dans deux de ses plus éminents représentants
Saint Vincent de Paul et
Mademoiselle Legras.

So for Louise, consecration (that is, incorporation or communion with Jesus Christ), meant:

- ❖ A lifelong commitment to work on behalf of humankind
- ❖ A life that seeks the things that are above
- ❖ A life that contributes to the building up of the Kingdom of God on earth.
- ❖ A giving to God our full consent to operate in us by his power whatever he wills to see accomplished
- ❖ A clothing of herself in an attitude that enabled her to imitate Jesus: an exterior imitation (performing the same actions that Jesus did when he walked on the earth) and an interior imitation (the sentiments and virtues of Jesus).

St. Vincent said to the Sisters soon after Louise's death that "She lived as Saint Paul said: "it is no longer I who live, but Jesus who lives in me."



Epilogue

How Vincent and Louise *helped people to live well*:

- ❖ engaging in service, and teaching others to do the same
- ❖ teaching people to live in accord with the gospel, to integrate gospel values into their lives and, in that way, imitate Jesus Christ
- ❖ when serving the poor, attending not only to their primary material and other more urgent needs, but also teaching them (children and adults) the catechism which contains the truths necessary for salvation (a salvation that has consequences in everyday life)

This manner of acting is closely related to that of Jesus Christ who led people to fullness of life.



Presentation adapted from:

The Concept of Consecration in the Writings of Louise de Marillac

By: Sister Carmen Urrizburu, DC

read the entire article,
available online at
<http://famvin.org/wiki/>

