

Homily of Father Oliviers Maire, smm
On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the arrival
of Blessed Marie Louise of Jesus in St. Laurent.

October 11th, 2020

"Blessed above all those who are invited to the Lord's Supper."

The parable we have just heard speaks of weddings (Mt 22, 1-10). Jesus echoes a text from the book of Proverbs, a Wisdom text at the beginning of chapter 9, where it is written: "Wisdom built her house, she carved and set up seven columns, she killed his animals, she prepared her wine, she even set the table, she sent his handmaidens, and she began to shout from the top of the city..., "You who are foolish who have passed through here, you who lack understanding, come and eat the bread and drink the wine I have prepared. Leave your foolishness and walk the path of intelligence. » (Prov. 9, 1)

Well, that's what Blessed Marie Louise of Jesus did. She took to the road, she answered the call of Wisdom. It is true that here (in St. Laurent) Wisdom built her house... I don't know if you noticed it, in Wisdom's courtyard of honour, but on the door it is written: Wisdom built her house [...] Wisdom built her house, various houses.

To follow Blessed Mary Louise of Jesus is to follow Christ Wisdom. It is to want to live wisely but with the wisdom of Christ who wants to be a very special wisdom.

The second reading gives us an example of this. In the letter to the Philippians (4: 12-14. 19-20), St. Paul says quite simply that he knows how to live in poverty as well as in wealth. He is as happy when he has abundance as when he lacks everything. This faith in Wisdom, in knowing how to live equally well in extremely difficult or very diverse circumstances, is what Marie Louise lived her whole life.

As a young girl, from a good family from Poitiers, Christ Wisdom invited her through the words of Father de Montfort to come to the General Hospital of Poitiers. At the time, general hospitals were appalling. They were places of confinement, of exclusion, where all the scum of society were locked up. Well, that's where Marie Louise found her happiness. She knew how to live as comfortably at her parents' home as she did at the general hospital in Poitiers, sharing the life of these poor people who were locked up. After many years in the hospital of Poitiers, which she reformed and administered in a masterly manner, Father de Montfort invited her to leave for La Rochelle to look after a small school. Marie Louise will be able to tell us that she is as happy as when she is administering the hospital with nearly a thousand people, as she is to go and teach a few little girls. And then, back in Poitiers, in 1720, she still receives this call to leave, this call from Wisdom: Come to the Vendée. She is going to leave Poitiers, the general hospital, to come here (St. Laurent).

In Poitiers there were several hundred poor and sick people, here there will be only a handful.

In La Rochelle, she ran a school for 400 girls which she had founded, here she will have only a handful of young girls from St. Laurent.

She will be as happy in La Rochelle, Poitiers and St. Laurent. She has learned what it is to live according to Wisdom. Wisdom that is already a human wisdom. Knowing how to live in embarrassment as well as in abundance, is a wisdom that is also simply human wisdom. One cannot live divine wisdom if one does not first share human wisdom. This human wisdom that always trusts in the future, that is always open. Coming here, Marie Louise will find an old house, she has little to begin with. She lives in misery, she lives in precariousness. And yet little by little her work will grow. She did not begin by saying: "Ah well, I will begin the establishment of the Daughters of Wisdom when I will have a big house, many sisters, means and I will be able to do this and that. No. She wisely agreed to start small to do the Lord's work. Proof of wisdom.

Proof of wisdom too, the people of St. Laurent who helped her. Ah, it's true that she had a lot of animosity and problems but she could have said like St. Paul: "However you did well to show solidarity when I was in trouble." The people who helped Marie Louise at the beginning in this very difficult period, they did well to help her. You can imagine if these people had not helped Marie Louise, what St. Laurent would be today.

Wisdom... Wisdom too, this secret of Marie Louise's life which is given to us in the first reading, the book of Wisdom (6, 12-14: 8, 1-3.9). In this reading, I will underline two words. A first word, a very curious word: "*the same*". Wisdom is "*the same*". That is to say, she sits on the same seat as we do. It is translated very well, saying that if we look for her at dawn, we will find her sitting at our door. Marie Louise tells us this: Jesus the Christ is not far from us. We should not go looking for her in heaven or elsewhere. Jesus Christ Wisdom, we always find him sitting at our door, sitting on our doorstep. Jesus came to share our life as it is. We will always find him sitting at our door. All we have to do is open it to him.

This expression can also be read in Wisdom (9, 4-6) when Solomon prays this prayer to God saying: "Give me Wisdom sitting beside you." Wisdom is not only sitting next to us, Wisdom is always with God, sitting on the same seat as God, being God himself. Christ Wisdom lives a double solidarity. First of all he is in solidarity with us; Jesus Wisdom is in solidarity with us. But he also lives another solidarity from all eternity with God his Father. To come closer to Wisdom is to come closer to God, but in a gentle way, in a simple way, in a humble way like someone sitting next to us. This is the closeness of God in our lives.

This is what Marie Louise experienced. She lived, the presence of God all around her. Christ Wisdom sitting next to her. But Christ Wisdom, not only Jesus Christ, but Christ Wisdom in the presence of the poorest and the smallest. It is this solidarity that she experienced at the General Hospital. One cannot understand Marie Louise, nor Father de Montfort, if one has not grasped what they lived for several years by sharing the life of the poorest; those excluded from the

society of their time. This is the secret of their holiness. They understood that Christ Wisdom was not found in heaven or in a church but was found by sharing the life of the poorest.

And it is the second word that I want to stress in the first reading (Wis. 6, 12-14: 8, 1-3.9): sharing life. The verb means "*to be in salvation*", "*to be in symbiosis*". Wisdom lives a double symbiosis. She lives a symbiosis with her Father and she lives a symbiosis with us. This "*living with*", this double living with is what Marie Louise lived, here, elsewhere and everywhere in poverty as well as in abundance. She lived this *sharing of life* with the poor. She lived this *sharing of life* with Christ Wisdom who always made her live. She has always lived this *sharing of life* with the Sisters in community. She teaches us here through this *sharing of life* what she dreams for consecrated life, religious life: a life given to the Lord, a life lived in sharing with God, being "like" God, daring to sit on the very seat of God, sharing the life of our brothers and sisters. It is a community life for which it is necessary to have a house and a few tables and this life in solidarity, in sharing with the poorest. It is not by chance, an obligation, because the first house that Marie Louise occupied here, she shared it, not only with her sisters, but she also shared it with the little girls of the school and with the elderly people who needed care. A life in symbiosis with her sisters, with the poor. This is what Marie Louise could have said to everyone this morning: share your life. Live a life of sharing with others, don't waste your life by living it alone, isolated, protected from the world, protected from others - you have to protect yourself from the virus but not from others.

This symbiosis with the world in which we live, this world of exclusion as Pope Francis would say, this world of the periphery, is what Marie Louise experienced. Fraternal life, the Pope's last encyclical (*Fratelli Tutti*), reminds us of this, living in symbiosis with the other, fraternal life and living in symbiosis with God himself. Let us dare to sit down for a time of fraternal sharing, let us dare to sit down with the poorest, the excluded, and the rejects of humanity. This is an expression taken from a hymn that Father de Montfort composed for Marie Louise de Jesus. And let us dare to sit with God himself. Let us be "*like him*". Let us sit among brothers and sisters, let us sit with the poorest, and let us sit with God. This is also what St. Paul said in the first epistle to the Corinthians. He says: "Those who give their lives to the Lord and to others, they sit on the same throne as God himself". So let us dare to sit with God, with our brothers and sisters, in brotherhood and with the poor, the excluded and the rejects of humanity.