

Marie Thérèse Charlotte de Lamourous 1754-1836

A week after Marie Thérèse's death, *La Guienne*, a newspaper of Bordeaux, wrote in its issue of September 21, 1836:

Often her *filles* lacked clothing, or there was no bread for the morrow. She would go begging to the rich, and often received only humiliations instead. Happy at these refusals, she would return home and go with her *filles* into the little chapel. There, before the Blessed Sacrament, with that simplicity which faith imparts, she would knock at the tabernacle door. "My Lord," she would say aloud, "your children have no bread." No sooner had she left the chapel but someone would bring bread, clothing, etc. (Stefanelli, *Mlle de Lamourous*, 408).

Reliance on God certainly characterizes Marie Thérèse. And we know from the Church's investigation into her holiness that she acted with virtue in all the twists and turns of her life. She was deeply involved in helping William Joseph Chaminade to establish the Sodality of the Madeleine in Bordeaux, and she participated in the foundation of two



Marianist religious congregations. She was the compassionate, no-nonsense *Mère* (mother) of a community of some three hundred women in early nineteenth-century France. They all had one common background, a necessary qualification for membership—they had been prostitutes in Bordeaux. Throughout her 81 years, Marie Thérèse also found the time and energy to supervise her family's property at Pian, a small town northwest of Bordeaux, and to take responsibility for supporting members of her extended family, as well as to sustain the faith life of the people of Pian.

With every person and in each endeavor, she was firm of hand and loving of heart. She was a marvelously efficient organizer and administrator, an initiator and a leader. She was also a gentle soul who attracted the affection of others by her simplicity, straightforwardness, and kind generosity.

[Material taken from Joseph Stefanelli, SM, *Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, Firm of Hand, Loving of Heart* (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 2001), p. 1. Text provided through the courtesy of the North American Center for Marianist Studies.

“The French word *fille* may mean ‘daughter,’ or ‘young person of the female sex.’ It was—and still is—commonly used for prostitute. . . . Many of the prostitutes who came to Marie Thérèse were, in fact, young girls and adolescents, but there were also many adult women, mothers, married women, and widows among them.” Joseph Stefanelli, SM, *Mlle de Lamourous* (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 1998), p. xiv.]



[*Note:* Marie Thérèse died on Wednesday, September 14, 1836, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. “The official process for her canonization was begun in 1911. On December 21, 1989, the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints decreed that she had practiced heroic virtue during her lifetime. Someday, ‘The Saint of Bordeaux’ may well become a saint of the Church and of the world” (Stefanelli, *Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, Firm of Hand*, pp. 26-27).]