

## Marie Madeleine Louise Humann

Madeleine Louise Humann was born on September 29, 1766, in Fessenheim, near Strasbourg. Louis Colmer was six years old and Marie Thérèse Brek, 11. Louis Bautain was born 30 years later. Louise was the eldest of 13 children, only half of whom survived, was mainly self-taught and was an avid reader; first learning to read from the German Bible and soon after, began reading French. Religion for her was a matter of the heart and she was to inherit the rich spiritual traditions of the Rhineland mystics.

In 1788, Louise entered the monastery of Sainte-Barbe in Strasbourg joining the Canonesses of St Augustine. She seemed to have all she desired - prayer, contemplation, study and teaching - but she left after seven months, feeling hopeless, useless, and bereft of any clear purpose.

It was thanks to her cousin Louis Colmer, a priest in Strasbourg, that she found renewed hope. He invited her to join a group of young women who helped him with his charitable work. It was through Louis Colmer that she met Marie Thérèse Brek, a widow with three children. Louise undertook to educate her children and went to live with the Breks in Rue Sainte Elizabeth. A deep spiritual connection was formed between Louise and Thérèse, both of them benefitting from the spiritual direction of Louis Colmer; all three of them would meet and pray together. Louise approached the Gospels with the simplicity of a child, and especially loved the Gospel of St John. These spiritual experiences were the foundation for the Turkenstein Pact of 1797.

In 1802, Louis Colmer was appointed Bishop of Mainz in Germany, leaving Louise very upset. Once again Colmer came to her rescue, and asked her and Thérèse to set up a boarding school for girls in Mainz. In 1805, the school opened, where she directed the students towards to the love of God, encouraging them to go quietly to the chapel and spend some time in prayer.

Louis Colmer died in 1818 and three months later Louise returned to Strasbourg. Around this time a young Professor, Louis Bautain, lived nearby. Aged 24, he was suffering a severe nervous breakdown, and to restore his health he travelled to the German health resort of Baden-Baden, where he met Louise who was on holiday with one of her family. There, they began discussions on German philosophy. Back in Strasbourg, Louise invited Bautain to visit her. He became aware of the beauty of her character, her gentleness, simplicity, goodness of heart, and her consideration for him. He felt God had sent him an angel in human form and with her help he returned to the practice of his childhood faith and was reconciled to the church.

In 1824, Louise moved into 7 Rue de la Toussaint, where she was joined by Thérèse, her son, and Louis Bautain. It was in this house that Bautain taught the future Fathers of St Louis, while Louise was their spiritual mother. She was the very heart of this group. She was Bautain's guide; he confided in her while she listened and left him free.

As her earthly life was coming to a close, she gave her Turkenstein Cross to Bautain. Her last words to him were, "I transmit to you all that the Bishop of Mainz transmitted to me."

She died on September 19, 1836, aged 70.

The following is a prayer that she wrote in her diary:

*God of light, of life and of love,  
God of goodness of truth and of beauty,  
Make yourself felt in my soul,  
Let my inner life be enlightened by you.*