

## Venerable Marie de la Ferre, R.H.S.J. (1590–1652)

Marie de la Ferre was born in 1590, in Roiffé, a small village in France, where conflicts between Catholics and Protestants were very pronounced. Her mother passes on to Marie her devotion to the Virgin Mary and her love and respect for the Eucharist. Towards 1601, when her mother dies, Marie goes to live with her aunt at the manor in Ruigné, near La Flèche. Her aunt introduces Marie to society life and wants her to make a brilliant match. Marie is taken up by worldliness and puts aside her faith, but feels solitude and emptiness at the same time.



When she is 18 years old, on July 22 1607, she has a very strong spiritual experience during mass that will change her life: the Lord manifests himself to her in a very strong and powerful way. From that day on, Marie changes completely. She gets rid of her luxurious clothes, her jewelry and gives up her perfumes. A spiritual director helps her resist further temptations and face the resistance of her environment, that does not accept her conversion. Marie de la Ferre, in complete freedom, devotes herself to serve her family, her parish and the poor of the neighborhood Ste-Colombe in La Flèche. In town she is known as the “sainte demoiselle” (“the holy lady”).

When her aunt dies she continues her spiritual quest. Her spiritual directors suggest that she enter religious life, but every time (for four times) she decides to enter a religious community she becomes ill. In 1634, during communion, she has a vision that will reveal her vocation: she sees herself in a big room filled with beds. She speaks to Jérôme Le Royer, whom she already knew, and they share their common project of founding a hospital for the poor and a religious community devoted to caring for them. On May 18, 1636, with her friend Anne Foureau, she joins the three sisters already serving the poor at the Hotel-Dieu. Marie de la Ferre becomes the first superior of this community until 1650. In 1651 she founds another community in Moulins. She dies on July 28, 1652.

### LINK:

<http://www.rhsj.org/en/home.php>