

3-1-2018

## 2018: Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous

Allison Leigh  
University of Dayton, [aleigh1@udayton.edu](mailto:aleigh1@udayton.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/women\\_of\\_ud](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/women_of_ud)

---

### Recommended Citation

Leigh, Allison, "2018: Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous" (2018). *Women of UD*. 12.  
[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/women\\_of\\_ud/12](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/women_of_ud/12)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Women's Center at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Women of UD by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu), [ecommons@udayton.edu](mailto:ecommons@udayton.edu).

---

*During Women's History Month, the University of Dayton Women's Center coordinates, as an experiential learning opportunity for students, an annual exhibit highlighting the contributions women have made at the University of Dayton.*

*Theme for 2018: Trailblazers*

---

## 2018: Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous

*Written by Allison Leigh, Ph.D.*

*“Let us constantly beg our good mother to strengthen us in our weakness, to increase our courage and our faithfulness, and by the love she bears us, to preserve us from the misfortune of ever losing sight of what faith has a right to demand of us with greater reason than of others.” — Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous*

Marie-Thérèse is often described as firm of hand and loving of heart. She did the work her faith called her to, from underground ministries during the French revolution to running the Misericorde, a home for prostitutes trying to find a new life for themselves. Deeply rooted in prayer, Marie-Thérèse never failed to take on the most practical tasks from soliciting work for the women she was serving in the Misericorde, to managing a budget and fundraising.

Marie-Thérèse was born in 1754 and was well-educated by her family in both traditional subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics, and agricultural topics such as stock raising. Faith was an important part of her upbringing; at age 25 she sought a spiritual director. The beginning of the French revolution meant Marie-Thérèse had to take her faith underground and during that time she lost a number of her spiritual directors to the guillotine. Eventually she met with Fr. Chaminade in Bordeaux and he would become her spiritual director and closest collaborator for almost 40 years.

Marie-Thérèse was active in her ministry during the French revolution and brought people together for prayer, worship, and preparation for the sacraments in the underground church. This work necessitated her traveling in disguise, but she was successful in helping sustain communities of faith in a time where religion was suppressed.

After the French Revolution, Marie-Thérèse was ready to settle down when a friend asked for her help running the Misericorde. Initially, she did not wish to take on work with prostitutes



to help them find a better life. It was only after visiting the house, and a dream she had, that she realized she was called to this work. There she poured her heart and soul into the ministry. At the house, Marie-Thérèse set up a Rule of Life, where the staff and residents lived together and shared in the work, as well as communal prayer and recreation. In addition to running the Misericorde, Marie-Thérèse maintained her contact with Chaminade and was a member of the Bordeaux Sodality.

Throughout her life, Marie-Thérèse engaged others in the work of faith and justice. Through the French Revolution she worked with those who wanted to continue to practice their faith. At the Misericorde she empowered the residents to help with the upkeep of the house, and she worked with the local community to find jobs for the residents and support for the house. She continued spiritual direction with Fr. Chaminade and inspired many with her loving approach. In 1836, after a long battle with illness she died, leaving a powerful witness and example of a life lived for the poor and marginalized.