

31. For the greater glory of God and the salvation of the peoples of the Pacific

On hearing the appeal of the women of Wallis to the faithful of Lyons: "send us some devout women to teach the women of Ouvea", Mademoiselle Françoise Perroton sought a way to share the work of the missionaries. This unmarried teacher, 49 years old, was ready to set out as the only woman aboard the ship, in order to share the missionaries' work. Commander Marceau organized his Oceania expedition in collaboration with the Marist Fathers whose missionary activity he greatly assisted. He would himself become a member of the Third Order in 1849.

I am nothing at all. Yes, Sir, this nothing wants to be something, and my wishes are quite unchanged. ... My firm wish is to serve on the mission fields for the rest of my life, and you, Sir, are the only person who can provide me the means of doing so by taking me under your care on a voyage that is so long and so expensive. Would that I had a fortune to offer! But, as you know, my resources are very meagre, and the only thing I have of value is my good will. I have only a very small sum of money, and this is nothing, nothing at all. But I would have you accept it as compensation for the things you will have to provide me with during the voyage. Once I have arrived, God will provide for my needs. I am confident of this for I do not wish anything else than His glory and the salvation of those good people of Oceania for whom I will willingly sacrifice myself if that is what God wants of me. I am praying that He will prompt you to look favourably on my request....

Pardon the liberty I am taking, Sir, but if I let this opportunity slip by, I will have missed my only chance and I do not want that to happen through any neglect on my part. If God wishes me to depart for the missions, He will guide you in your reply.... Whatever your decision, I shall be grateful to hear it so convinced I am that you will be acting according to God's good pleasure.

Letter of Marie Françoise Perroton to Commander Marceau,
Summer 1845, (OPS I, 11)

On July 23, 1816, the first Marists committed themselves at Fourvière for the greater glory of God and the greater honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus. All our pioneers set out for the ends of the earth, forever, for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary. Do we have an equally strong desire that God be known, loved and honoured throughout the whole world?

