



# Feast of Saint Madeleine Sophie

## Prayer-Reflection Guide

Sophie's founding vision was born in the chaos of her own time. As we celebrate her feast this year, let us begin by bringing to mind the chaos of our current world that calls out for our response, our compassion, our creativity, our energy.

Opening Song: [Everyday God by Bernadette Farrell](#)

In many countries war, armed conflict and terrorism as well as environmental degradation are causing families to flee their homelands.

*“Among migrants, children constitute the most vulnerable group, because as they face the life ahead of them, they are invisible and voiceless: their precarious situation deprives them of documentation, hiding them from the world’s eyes; the absence of adults to accompany them prevents their voices from being raised and heard. In this way, migrant children easily end up at the lowest levels of human degradation, where illegality and violence destroy the future of too many innocents, while the network of child abuse is difficult to break up.”*

Pope Francis' message on the World Day of Migrants 2017



Pixabay; Ria Sopala, Amber Clay, Jim Black

Give yourself time to allow images to come to mind. Call to mind those who travel in human caravans or give over their life savings to people smugglers who promise to carry them or their children across borders. See the elderly, women and children who flee Ukraine. See children abandoned and without hope.

Throughout her life Sophie was continually challenged to balance her response to both the internal needs of the Society as it grew and many external calls. Situations were never perfect. Finances were often strained, and she frequently complained that there were insufficient resources to respond to requests made of the Society.

In 1837, after six weeks of quarantine during a cholera outbreak in Rome, Sophie emerged to face a changed reality. Seven religious had died at the Trinita, a fact others had shielded her from during these weeks. Walking to visit the religious at Santa Rufina in the Trastevere she discovered for herself the devastating effect that cholera had had on the general population of the city. On October 24, she wrote to Adelaide de Rozeville of this experience.

“At Santa Rufina there was a sadder spectacle. My visit to the shelter was moving. They bought me children without father or mother, left in the streets and picked up by others who already had large families. All these children pell-mell on the same mattresses! My tears flowed in spite of myself. I told our Mothers to take in the most abandoned; we will take some at (the Villa Lante) when our large building is ready. But these people cannot pay. Never mind!”



**Sit with this passage and reflect on your own experience as we emerge from the pandemic to find a changed world reality.**

- What in your recent experience (either an in-person encounter or watching news) has caused your tears to flow or tugged at your heart to make a response? Notice if you have become numb to the overwhelming disasters that constantly demand your attention.
  - How did you respond to the heart tug? or What prevented you from responding to this desire in the way you would have wanted?
  - How might you encourage your community/your institution to respond to these needs with greater spontaneity and generosity?

**Share with each other a statement, a desire or a prayer that surfaces during your reflection.**



María Gallardo of the Godella School (Valencia)

### Closing prayer:

Gracious God,  
your Spirit spoke in the depth of Sophie’s heart  
and gave her the courage to act  
with compassion and generosity.

We pray that following in her footsteps  
we might be freer and more passionate in our response  
as you call us to be your presence in the chaos  
and the pain of our time.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

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