

## **Venerable Louis and Zélie Martin, parents of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, to be beatified on Mission Sunday, October 19, 2008**

The Venerable Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face, will be beatified on Mission Sunday, October 19, in the basilica dedicated to their daughter at Lisieux in France. The first parents of a saint to be beatified, they are the first spouses in the history of the Church to be proposed for sainthood as a couple and the second to be beatified together.

Zélie and Louis are an inspiration to the families of today. Each owned a small business and worked hard while raising a large family. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this two-career couple faced the challenges we face in the 21<sup>st</sup>: finding good child care; achieving professional excellence; operating a profitable business; caring for aging parents; educating a special-needs child; forming their children in the faith; finding time to pray and to be active in their parish. Devout Catholics, they saw Christ in the poor and worked for a just society. In 1877 Zélie died of breast cancer, leaving Louis a single parent with five minor daughters to bring up. Later Louis was diagnosed with cerebral arteriosclerosis and spent three years in a psychiatric hospital.

Like us, Louis and Zélie could not control their circumstances. Life came at them unexpectedly, just as it comes at us. They could not prevent their tragedies: the Franco-Prussian war, when they had to house nine German soldiers; the infant deaths of four of their nine children, one from abuse by a wet-nurse; their painful diseases; Zélie’s premature death. Nor could they escape their responsibilities as business owners, caregivers, spouses, and parents. Their genius lay in how they *accepted* what happened to them: they accepted their own powerlessness, that God might be all-powerful in their lives.

They taught the same radical openness to their youngest daughter, Thérèse, now a doctor of the Church. Zélie and Louis were not declared “blessed” because of Thérèse. She became a saint because of them. They created an environment that invited her to holiness, and she responded freely to the invitation they offered her.

They offer the same invitation to us. We know many “married saints,” but most canonized saints have not been married. In recognizing Louis and Zélie as a blessed couple, the Church points to the mystery of the vocation of marriage, the way of life in which most people are called to reach the common goal of all Christians: sainthood. Engaged unreservedly in the responsibilities of daily life, Zélie and Louis became saints in the fabric of their marriage. They epitomize the words of Pope John Paul II: “Heroism must become daily, and the daily must become heroic.” They are the heroes of the everyday.

Jose Cardinal Saraiva Martins will preside at the Beatification Mass at the Basilica of Saint Thérèse in Lisieux on Mission Sunday, October 19. For a press kit, please see <http://www.thereseoflisieux.org/press-kit-for-the-beatificatio>