

Real Love

What We Can Learn from Saints Louis & Zelie Martin

One of the main things I love about Saints Louis and Zelie Martin's relationship is their devotion and love for each other. Their letters to each other show how beautiful and extraordinary their affection was to each other.

"Your husband and true friend who loves you for life." -Louis

"I embrace you with all my heart. I am so happy that today I will welcome you back home that I can hardly work for the joy of it. Your wife who loves you more than her own life!" -Zelie

This couple is best known as the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux (the Little Flower), but they are models of holiness in their own right. They are only the second married couple to be canonized. *A Call to a Deeper Love* is a wonderful volume containing 218 letters of Saint Zelie and 16 of Saint Louis. Reading these letters is like reading a blog from a mom these days, these letters are so refreshing to read and definitely worth checking out. All of us who are called to marriage desire a Happy and Holy marriage, that's the dream.

The Martin family were well off, as such they had everything they wanted, and yet like everyone else they had big crosses to carry. When you are inside the Martin's house you can see a cross over the door symbolizing all the trials they went through as a family. Zelie had her heart set on becoming a nun, however, our plans are not always God's plan. When she met Louis, she heard a voice inside of her say this is the one I have prepared for you. Our Lady had spoken to Zelie and Zelie knew God wanted her to marry Louis. After 3 months they were married. When you know, you know.

Zelie and Louis had nine children within thirteen years. As Zelie's health was bad, childbearing was not easy for her, she had the early stages of breast cancer, meaning all her babies had to go to a wet nurse to be fed. All three of their boys died at infancy and their daughter Helena died at age 5. In those days infant mortality was common. They are such a powerful example of what a family ought to be, they prayed together as a family, which is so much neglected in most families today. A family that prays together stays together. Zelie and Louis had their moments where they disagreed but they trusted in God's goodness and in each other. They always trusted God's plan even when they didn't understand it.

They worked together for the family income with a lace-making business. Zelie made the lace and managed the workers and Louis ran the business side of it.

All five of their daughters became nuns, and St Therese became a Doctor of the Church. Her little way of salvation simply consisted of offering up everything—good and bad—for the love of God.

When you visit Lisieux down the road from the Martin's house is a basilica where the bones of Saint Louis and Saint Zélie are interred together in a large shining reliquary. *"You will soon find again those you mourn,"* wrote Zélie's sister. *"Yes, your crown will be beautiful—very beautiful. Just now your heart is broken but by your acquiescence in all that God wills, there will come a fragrance which will delight the Heart of God!"*

Even saint's children don't always listen, which is so refreshing and so real to family life. Zélie, in one of her letters, explains that there are times her children don't get ready, *"I felt very bad that the little girls didn't go with him to greet their uncle. It was their fault. It didn't matter how many times I told them, 'Get dressed early.'"* They went about it in a way so as to not be ready on time." (Letter 137). How encouraging it is to see that Zélie became a saint with the same problem nearly every mother has with their children getting ready on time.

Zélie and Louis knew their vocation was to help their children get to heaven, their eternal home. *"When we had our children, our ideas changed somewhat. We lived only for them. They were all our happiness, and we never found any except in them. In short, nothing was too difficult, and the world was no longer a burden for us. For me, our children were a great compensation, so I wanted to have a lot of them in order to raise them for Heaven."* (Letter 192). It is easy to get caught up in a worldly mentality of raising our children, but really, they are meant for Heaven.

Louis and Zélie were each other's greatest comfort! To become saints as a married couple really means giving oneself entirely to each other and to God. They both provide a beautiful example of married family life and gives each of us hope in the struggles and trials of family life. Once we trust in God, nothing is impossible.

Their feast day is July 12th.

Saints Louis and Zélie Martin pray for us

<https://pureinheart.ie/>

