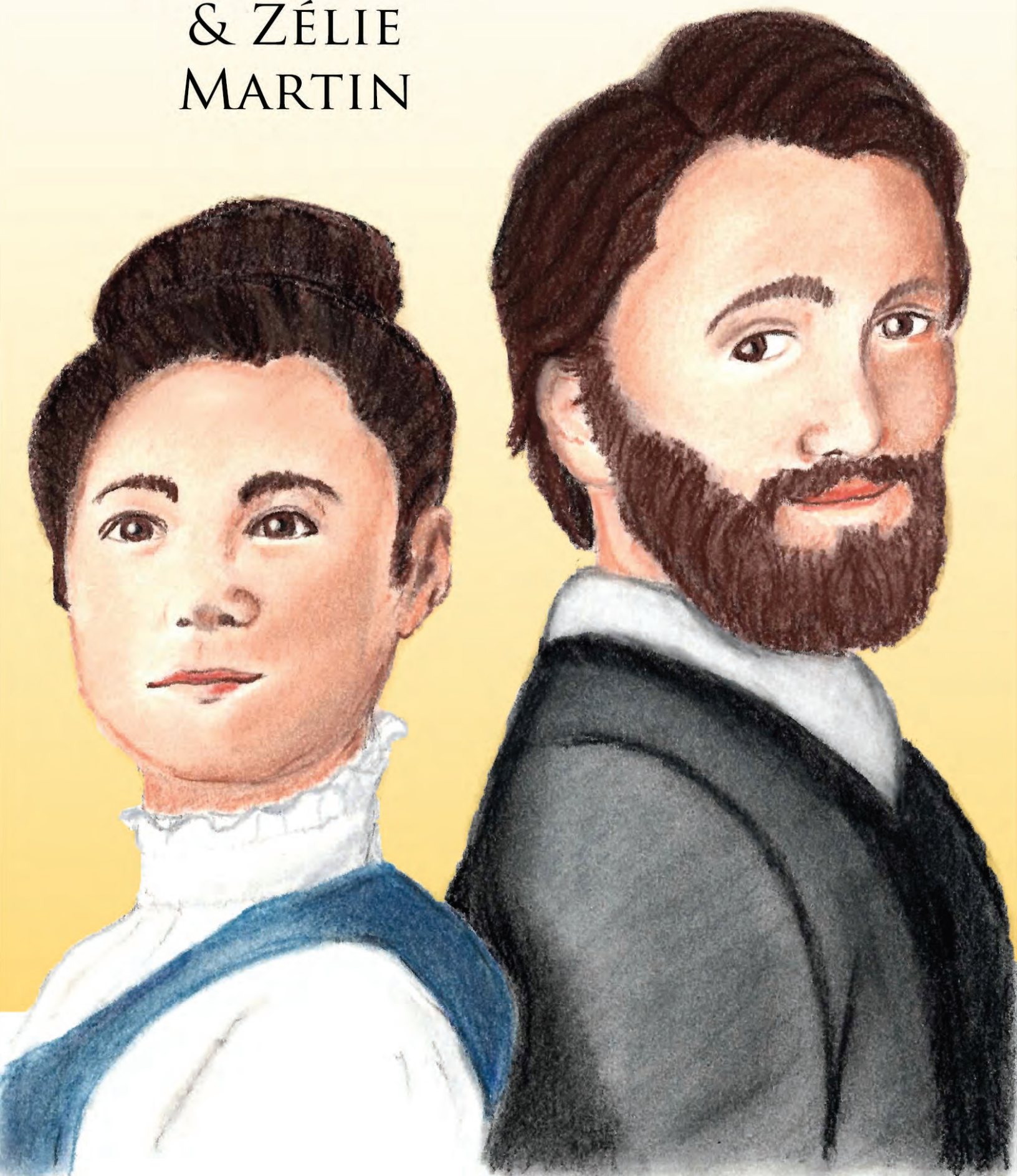


SAINTS LOUIS
& ZÉLIE
MARTIN



MARRIED LIFE

Saints Louis



Zélie Martin



Saint Thérèse of Lisieux is one of the most popular saints in the Catholic Church. Many people know her, including many people who are not Catholic or even Christian. They call her the “Little Flower” because she taught about the beauty and importance of doing little things with great love for God.

On the other hand, few people know Saint Louis and Saint Zélie Martin, yet without them, Saint Thérèse would not have become such a saint. Louis and Zélie Martin were Saint Thérèse’s father and mother. They were the ones who first taught Saint Thérèse of God’s love and how she could love God in her life.



Both Louis and Zélie had a deep love for God and wanted to serve Him with their lives. As a young man, Louis thought a lot about being a priest, and when she was growing up, Zélie dreamed of being a religious sister. Yet, those were not the dreams that God had for their lives. Louis went on to become a master watchmaker, and Zélie became an expert lacemaker. They were both very good at their work.

Louis’ mother met Zélie at a lacemaking class and she introduced her to her son. Very soon after meeting each other, they were married on July 13, 1858, in the Church of Our Lady of Grace. Although they loved each other this was not the only reason they got married. They got married because they also loved God. They realized that God wanted them to know, loved, and serve Him in marriage. That was their vocation or their calling.

After they married, Zélie’s lace business was doing very well. Louis abandoned his watch making to help his wife with her business. Louis and Zélie were hard, honest workers, but they were also generous in helping others who were in need. The love they shared with each other in marriage gave them a

greater love for God and for others. For example, in the first year of their marriage, they welcomed into their home a young boy whose mother had died. They cared for him as if he was one of their own. He was only five years old.

Soon Louis and Zélie had children of their own. They eventually had nine children total, although four of their children died when they were still young. With so many children and so much work, Louis and Zélie were very busy, but they tried hard not to let the things of this world distract them from God. They kept God and faith at the center of their marriage and their family. Despite all they were doing, Louis and Zélie were very faithful to prayer, including praying together as a family. They even went to Mass during the week.

Louis and Zélie cared so much for their children. They wanted their children to know how much they loved them, but even more importantly they wanted their children to know how much God loved them. At home, they taught their children about God and prayed with them. It was like their home became a little church where they could meet God in their daily interactions with each other. In fact, it was from her parents that Saint Thérèse learned about the “little way,” because Louis and Zélie taught their children to try “to please Jesus” in all things, even in difficulties.

Louis and Zélie’s example and love as parents, as well as the way they faithfully lived their vocation to married life in service of God, inspired their children to want to give their lives to God as well. Five of their daughters, including Thérèse, went on to become religious sisters.

Zélie died of cancer on August 28, 1877. Her death was hard for Louis, who was left to care for the children who were still at home. Yet, he trusted in the support and prayers of his wife. He lived almost 17 years more, dying on July 29, 1894.

Pope Francis canonized Louis and Zélie in 2015, which means they are officially saints like their daughter Thérèse. The pope canonized them together, as a married couple, because it was in their marriage to each other that they grew closer to God and in holiness. They did not become holy alone but together as husband and wife. As Saint Thérèse said about her parents, “God gave me a mother and father more worthy of heaven than of earth.”



“God gave me a mother
and father more worthy of
heaven than of earth.”

- Saint Thérèse of Lisieux



Supplemental Materials on Sainly Models

Saints Louis & Zélie Martin



Saints Louis & Zélie Martin

Louis Born: August 22, 1823

Zélie Born: December 23, 1831

Married: July 13, 1858

Louis Died: July 29, 1894

Zélie Died: August 28, 1877

Canonized by
Pope Francis
October 18, 2015

Interesting Facts

- Zélie (pronounced: Zeh- lee) was a member of the Third Order of the Poor Clares.
- Zélie died from cancer when she was only 46 years old. Louis then moved the family to Lisieux to be by family (which is how Therese was able to be named St. Therese of Lisieux).
- The Mass during the week that they went to started at 5:30 am.

Likely Student Questions:

Did all the sisters go into the same convent?

No, four of the sisters became Carmelites, but one was a Visitation nun.

If they were that religious, why didn't Saint Louis or Saint Zélie enter the religious life?

Before marriage, Zélie wanted to become a nun. The novice master told her that she did not have a vocation for it. Louis wanted to join the Hermitage of the Great Saint Bernard of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, but was turned away based on his lack of knowledge of Latin. Yet, both of them saw that they could also aspire to holiness and give their lives in making God known, loved, and served as a married couple in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Was it difficult for Louis after his wife died?

Yes, Louis struggled after his wife had died, just like many married people can struggle when they lose their spouse. He was able to find help and support from other family members and the Church.

Discussion Questions:

Besides prayer, what might some of the daily habits of the Martin family have been?

Many of the family's daily habits were similar to other families, including playing together, doing their studies, completing their chores, etc. These are all normal things but done in love, they can become acts of service for others and for God.

Do you think the siblings ever fought?

Siblings, even ones who love each other, will always have differences of opinions. The difference in the Martin household might have been how those discussions looked. Arguing with respect and love is very different from trying to hurt the other person. In a prayerful, loving family, sometimes the arguments take on a less hurtful form.

(Continued ...)

Discussion Questions Continued:

Saints Louis & Zélie were very spiritual people on their own before they met each other. How do you think that their spirituality and their prayerful practices affected their marriage, their children, and their life at home?

Good habits begin with the individual. A person should not expect that all of his or her habits will magically change when they marry. Since Saints Louis and Zélie had already formed good, prayerful habits, they were more likely to be able to support the other if one faltered.

This personal and paired commitment to prayer would have spilled over to their children. They created a house where prayer and belief in God were the strong undercurrent in all things. In this way, Saints Louis and Zélie were able to foster in their children the gift of faith. This, in turn, creates a family environment that cannot be artificially manufactured. Only through the personal discipline of prayer can one hope to encourage faith in others.
