

## July 12

# SAINTS LOUIS MARTIN AND ZÉLIE GUERIN

### Optional Memorial

Louis Martin was born in Bordeaux, on August 22, 1823. While he was master-watchmaker in Alençon, he met Marie Azelie (Zélie) Guerin, a lace maker, born in Gandelain (St-Denis-sur-Sarthon), on December 23, 1831. They were married on July 13, 1858, and had nine children, including the future Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus. Model spouses, devoted parents, workers, attentive to the poor, always nourishing a missionary spirit, they found their strength and hope in regular attendance at Holy Mass and in a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin. After a long illness Zélie died in Alençon on August 28, 1877. Louis, in retirement, went to Lisieux near his in-laws to ensure a better future for his five children (the other four having died in infancy). This patriarch of the family, after offering all his children to God, knew suffering and illness. He died near Evreux on July 29, 1894.

From the Common of Holy Men, with the psalms of the day.

## OFFICE OF READINGS

### The Second Reading

(Zélie et Louis Martin, *Correspondance Familiale* [1863 – 1885]. Paris, 2004, L1, 72, 130, 81, 110, 147, 179, 204)

From the *Letters of St. Zélie Martin*

*We must be willing to accept generously the will of the good God*

My dear friend, I am really worried about you. Every day my husband makes sad prophecies. He knows Paris and told me that you will be exposed to temptations that, because you are not pious enough, you will not be able to overcome. He told me that he experienced them himself, and that he needed a lot of courage to come out victoriously from all the battles. If you only knew what trials he had to go through ... I beg you, my dear Isidore (Zélie's brother), to do as I did; *pray*, and you will not be carried away by the current. If you succumb once you will be lost. On the road to perdition as on the road to salvation the first step is all important; afterwards you will be carried away by the current.

When I closed the eyes of my dear little children and buried them, I really felt the pain. It is a pain to which I have always been resigned. I do not regret the pains and the anxieties I have had to endure on their account. Many people have said to me: "It would have been better if you had never had them." I cannot tolerate these words. The pains and anxieties of this life cannot be compared to the eternal happiness of my children. After all, they have not been lost forever, life is short and full of suffering, we shall find them in heaven.

Little Therese is always well and looks very healthy. She is very intelligent and we have very amusing conversations. She already knows how to pray to God. Every Sunday, she goes for some part of Vespers and if, by mistake, the family forgets to bring her there she cries uncontrollably.

My sister has spoken to me a great deal about your business... I told her not to break her neck because of this, that there is only one thing to do, pray to God, because neither she, nor I, can help you in any other way. However, He, who is never embarrassed, will rescue us from all this when He sees that we have suffered enough, and then, you will recognize that your success is not due either to your ability or to your intelligence, but to God alone, as it happens with my lace making; this conviction is very beneficial, I have experienced it myself. You know that we are all inclined to be proud and I notice often that those who have made their fortune are, for the most part, unbearably self-important. I am not saying that I would have been like this, nor you either, but we would have been somewhat tainted by pride; it is a fact that constant prosperity leads one away from God. He never led his chosen ones along this path, they had to pass first through the

crucible of suffering in order to be purified. You are going to say that I am preaching, but no matter I don't wish to. I think of these things very often and I share them with you; now, call that a sermon if you like!

My dear children, I must go to Vespers to pray for the intention of our dear deceased relatives. The day will come when you will do this for me, but I must make sure that I do not have so great a need of your prayers. I would like to become a saint but this will not be easy; there is a lot of wood to burn but it is as hard as stone. It would have been better if I had begun earlier, when it was less difficult, but anyhow "it is better late than never."

Today is then Wednesday, the feast of the Immaculate Conception which is a great feast for me! On this day, the Blessed Virgin truly gave me many very special graces... This year, I will go again to find the Blessed Virgin early in the morning... my only prayer will be that those that she has given me will all be saints and that I shall not be too far behind, but they must be much better than me.

Doctor Notta is very sorry that they did not operate at the beginning, as by now it is too late. However, he seems to be saying that I can go on for a very long time like this. But more than that we put ourselves in God's hands, who knows better than us what we need, "it is He who wounds but also heals." I will go to Lourdes on the first pilgrimage, and I hope that the Blessed Virgin will heal me, if that is what is needed. Let's remain calm while we wait.

Before leaving, I will assist at the first Mass here, arriving in Le Mans at nine o'clock, still in time to attend the High Mass, after that I will come for you... At the beginning, your father was not happy that I took all three of you, but he wishes it now, and says that we cannot make enough sacrifices to obtain so great a miracle. Even if I do not obtain it, I will never regret taking you there. We must be willing to accept generously the will of God, whatever it is, because it will always be what is best for us.

### **Responsory**

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind,  
– so that you may be able to discover what is God's will,  
what is good, pleasing and perfect.

You must be renewed in mind and spirit, and put on the new man,  
– so that you may . . .

### **Prayer**

O God,  
who gave to Saint Louis and Marie Zélie  
the grace to lead a life of holiness  
as Christian spouses and parents,  
grant that, through their intercession and example,  
we may be able to love and serve you faithfully,  
living worthily our own vocation.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.