**On the Canonization of the Parents of St**. **Thérèse of Lisieux**

*by Margaret Malsam of Theresians of the Rockies*

*Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin, parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower*

Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face, will be recognized as saints October 18, 2015. They are the first married couple to be canonized TOGETHER in the history of the Church. In canonizing this holy couple as saints, the Church points to the mystery 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 married life, Zélie and Louis became saints.

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 19th century this two-career couples faced the challenges we face in the 21st: 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.

Like us, Louis and Zélie could not control their circumstances. Challenges came at them unexpectedly, just as it comes at us. They could not prevent tragedies touching them such as: the Franco-Prussian war when they had to house nine German soldiers; the infant deaths of four of their nine children from painful diseases and Zélie’s breast cancer. Zelie died when Therese was only four years old. Later when Therese was in the convent, Louis was diagnosed with cerebral arteriosclerosis and spent three years in a psychiatric hospital.

**Their holiness lay in how they accepted what happened to them. They accepted their own powerlessness so that God might be all-powerful in their lives**. They had so longed for a son who could become a priest, but their baby boys died in infancy and only their daughters lived to adulthood. **Instead of fathering a priest, they became parents of beloved St. Therese who also became a renowned Doctor of the Church.**

Zélie and Louis were not declared saints because of St Thérèse. **She became a saint because of them.** They created a holy home environment that invited her to holiness, and she responded freely to their invitation. Married just three months after meeting each other, Louis and Zelie lived in celibacy for nearly a year until they consulted with a priest who advised them to make their marriage fruitful by having children. Eventually they had nine children. Four died in infancy, and the remaining five daughters entered religious life.

Both had previously attempted to enter the religious life themselves - Louis as a monk and Zelie a nun. Zelie was turned away due to respiratory problems and frequent headaches, while Louis was denied entry because he couldn't speak Latin, which at that time was a requirement for entering the seminary. Louis then became a watchmaker, and Zelie a lace maker

We have heard of many “married saints,” but most canonized saints were never married. That’s why I chose to write and publish a book about married saints. In recognizing Louis and Zélie saints, 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.

They epitomize the words of St. Pope John Paul II: “Heroism must become daily, and the daily must become heroic.” Saints are the heroes of everyday life.

(Compiled from several sources by Margaret Malsam).