Saints Zélie and Louis Martin 12th July

Ex. 1, 8-14.22 Ps. 123 Mt. 10, 34 –11, 1

« Don’t think that I have come to bring peace on earth : I haven’t come to bring peace, but the sword. Yes, I have come to seperate man from his father, the daughter from her mother, the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law : you will have ennemies within your own household. »

The Martin couple’s feast day falls on the 12th July, on the same day as their wedding day. Louis Martin was born in Bordeaux on the 22nd August 1823. He was a clock maker.

Zélie Martin’s eyes first opened to this world on 23rd December 1831 in Gandelain, near to Saint-Denis-sur-Sarthon in Orne in France. She was a professional lace-maker.

On the 12th July 1858 Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin were married at the town hall in Alençon at 10pm, and they then recieved the sacrement at Midnight mass at Our Lady’s Church.

They had both thought about entering into religious life, however their path to holiness resided in living out the heart of their couple in a state of mariage and by being parents to 9 children (4 of whom died at an early age).

Zélie was a very active woman in charge of a small lace-making business which used the Alençon stitch ; the business employed around 20 women working from home. She was a very loving wife to her husband. In her letters to Louis, she writes : ‘Your wife who loves you more than her own life’ and ‘ I embrace you with so much love’. These are not just mere words : it is a joy for them to be together and to share what makes up their daily life under the Gaze of God our Loving Heavenly Father.

Zélie had a full life and yet also underwent trials and suffering. The Martin couple had 9 children between 1860 and 1873, 4 of whom died at an early age. The 5 surviving daughters all became religious, and Thérèse, a Carmelite who became Saint

Thérèse of Lisieux, died in 1897 at the age of 24. She was canonised in 1925. In 1997 she was made a Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul 2.

Jesus prepares his disciples for their Mission. We are made for God and can only find true Rest for our hearts in Him. Creation predisposes us for this Mystery of Love. Everything that is given to us on earth is a path so as to give us a glimpse of what Love we are loved with.

Jesus asks us to place Him at the highest level of our love :

‘Whoever loves his father or mother more than me is un worthy of me ; whovever loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me ; whoever doesn’t take his cross and follow me is unworthy of me. Whoever has found his life will lose it ; whoever loses his life because of my Name, will find it. »

Jesus accompanies us by His Presence and by His Word.

Zélie experiences great Joy at the birth of her children : ‘I love my children madly, I was born to have children’, she said.

When her last child is born, Thérèse, she already has breast cancer and her suffering is getting worse and worse. ‘I have already greatly suffered during my life’, she said.

The soul of the Martin family’s education is loving confidence. Zélie hopes that her children will become Saints. This doesn’t prevent her from organising parties, games, nor from buying fine dresses for her daughters.

Every day there is a family prayer and during the month of May the children orn with flowers a statue of Our Lady entitled Our Lady of the Smile.

Louis Martin is a son of a military man. It is in Alençon that he settles down,works and opens up a clock and jewelery shop. Before he gets married he spends his time between his work, his leisures (especially fishing). He commits himself to serving

the poorest in the Saint Vincent of Paul Conference and attends mass every morning.

Every week he worships God at Eucharistic Adoration.

He was full of attention and affection for his wife and daughters. When Zélie dies he decides to leave Alençon and to move to Lisieux to be close to the Guérin , his family-in-law.

After Thérèse enters the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux, his health problems begin and he will end up in the asylum of the Good Saviour in Caen, the psychiatric hospital at the time. During his periods of remission, he will see to the needs of his fellow patients. Paralysed, he comes back to his family on 29th July 1894 at the age of 71.

Zélie had written these words about her husband :’I am very happy with him. He gives me a very gentle life. My husband is really a very holy man, I wish for every wife to have a similar type of husband. »

« Whoever welcomes you welcomes me ; and whovever welcomes me welcomes the One who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in quality of a prophet will receive a reward of a prophet ; whovever welcomes a just man in the qality of a just man will recieve a reward of a just man. And whoever will give a drink to someone even if it is a mere glass of fresh water, to anyone of these little ones in the quality of disciple, amen I tell you, no , he will not lose his reward. « When Jessu finished his instructions that he had given to his twelve disciples he left there to go and teach in the neighbouring counties. »

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What was charectristic of the Martin couple was their capacity to live out holiness day in, day out, in a family background, by geatly trusting God’s Love and by having a relationship of their couple founded on prayer and generous self-giving. This a possible path for all couple who so wish to undertake it.

Zélie and Louis formed a home where love reigned, Thérèse will write : ‘ It pleased God to surround me with Love, my very first

memories printed on my mind are of smiles and of the tenderest of caresses.’

Thinking about her parents, she will say that they are more worthy of Heaven than of earth.

On Sunday 18th October 2015 Pope Francis proclaimed the married couple Zélie and Louis Martin as Saints.This was a very significant and symbolical gesture right in the middle of the Synode on the Family.

We need courage to go right to the bottom of who we are so as to dwell in God and His Love. We are the children of our Heavenly Father, sisters and brothers who love one another. God will cause to infinitely flourish all the loves we have in us and which He gives us. We become aware that whoever lives in God has to be considered as Jesus, the child of God.

Life on earth is a preparation for the Wedding feast, which celebrates the Mystery of Jesus’ greatest Love for the world. Weed to follow the path of liberation which Jesus came to offer us. We are created for a Love that goes beyond love.

To live accompagnied by Jesus is to rejoice in His Presence and in His Love.