

Th210515: Visit of Relics of Blessed Louis and Zélie (Cathedral)

BLESSED LOUIS AND ZELIE- PRAY FOR US

Today, in this Mass, we have the extraordinary privilege of welcoming into our midst a truly holy married couple: Blessed Louis and Blessed Zélie Martin, the parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux. Louis and Zélie were one of the first ever married couples to be beatified and soon we hope and pray for their canonisation. Louis, a watchmaker, and Zélie met on a bridge in Alençon in 1858. They had nine children, four of whom died young. All five surviving daughters, Thérèse the youngest, entered religious life. Louis and Zélie had personalities that were very different yet complimentary. United and faithful, daily Mass-goers, full of charity to the poor, they created a Christian home of simplicity, joy and faith. Today we venerate them and we earnestly seek their prayers.

In our Diocese of Portsmouth, the recent General Election produced a remarkable result: 30 of our 31 constituencies now have a Tory MP and the other day, I wrote to them to offer them all our prayers. Yet for us Catholics, politics is always about more than economics, accountancy, statistics. It's about vision and values: respecting life from conception to natural death, supporting marriage and the family, caring for the poorest, creating a just ecology and fostering peace among all. Some politicians seem to suggest that British values are essentially the NHS, decency and warm beer. No, what makes Britain great is its Christian patrimony: the concern for justice, freedom and the rule of law, values derived from love of God and love of neighbour, fused with our native genius. This is why the visit of Blessed Louis and Zélie Martin is crucial. They remind us of the natural way of life that Jesus has elevated by a Sacrament into a supernatural way: the domestic Church of husband and wife, open to love and open to life, raising a family through times of trouble and times of joy. The family is the foundation of society, which is where so many things in Britain today are going wrong. Government, business and all our institutions should be serving the family so that human happiness and authentic wellbeing might prosper

Father, may they be one is us, as you are in me and I am in you. This October, Pope Francis has called a Synod of Bishops in Rome to discuss Christ's teaching on marriage and family life, the preparation of engaged couples, the celebration of marriage in today's context, the pastoral care of families and new ways of showing God's mercy to those in difficulty. Some people seem to think, or hope, that the Synod will change the Church's doctrine on the hot-button issues beloved of the media. Yet as disciples of Jesus, we are always under the Word of God, not over it. Jesus Himself gave us the Gospel of the family, and as God the Son He is Truth. No pope, no bishop, no hierarchy, no one has the authority to change His Word, however much we rightly seek to reach out to, and care for those in difficulty. But this is why today, we're happy to have with us this Blessed Couple, Louis and Zélie.

We need, as the holy father has said, to prepare for the Synod less by chatter and more by prayer. So in this Mass and through this visitation, may this holy husband and wife enkindle within us a deeper faith and a profound gratitude to God for the gift of life and for our families. May they obtain for those in trouble or in breakdown, the healing of memories, new hope and a way forward. With Mary and Joseph, may they inspire our married couples and our families to have complete trust in God, to be united and faithful. Above all, as we prepare for the Synod, may Blessed Louis and Blessed Zélie help the universal Church discover afresh the joy of Christian marriage and family life.