

Pope plans to canonize St. Therese's parents during family synod



Blessed Louis and Marie Zélie Guérin Martin, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, are pictured in a combination photo created from images provided by the Sanctuary of Lisieux in France. Pope Francis is expected to canonize the couple during the world Synod of Bishops on the family in October. (CNS photo/courtesy of Sanctuary of Lisieux)

By Cindy Wooden

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VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis is expected to canonize Blessed Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, during the world Synod of Bishops on the family in October.

Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, leading a conference Feb. 27 on the role of saints in the life of the church, announced that "thanks be to God, in October two spouses, parents of Saint Therese of Lisieux, will be canonized."

Blessed Louis and Marie Zélie Guérin Martin were married in 1858. The couple had nine children, but four of them died in infancy. The five who survived - including St. Therese - all entered religious life. Zélie Martin died of cancer in 1877, at the age of 45; her husband died when he was 70 in 1894.

The couple was beatified in 2008. They are believed to be the first parents of a saint to be beatified, highlighting the important role parents play in their children's human and spiritual upbringing.

Following normal Vatican procedures, before their canonization the pope would have to recognize a miracle that occurred after prayers for the couple's intercession before God. The decree is expected to be signed before Easter.

The next step would be for the pope to consult with the church's cardinals and hold a consistory with cardinals present in Rome to announce the decision to proceed with the ceremony during the world Synod of Bishops on the family Oct. 4-25. A Vatican official said that meeting probably would take place in June.

According to the Lisieux shrine's website, a miracle being studied for the couple's

canonization involves a little girl in the Diocese of Valencia, Spain. Born prematurely and with multiple life-threatening complications, Carmen suffered a major brain hemorrhage, which could have caused irreversible damage. Her parents prayed for the couple's intercession. The little girl survived and is healthy.

Pope Francis has a special devotion to St. Therese. The pope used to keep a photo of the 19th-century French Carmelite nun on his library shelf when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires. He has said that when he has a problem, he asks St. Therese "not to solve it, but to take it in her hands and help me accept it." As a sign that she's heard his request, he said, "I almost always receive a white rose."

Before opening the October 2014 meeting of the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family, Pope Francis venerated the relics of St. Therese, her parents and another couple, Blessed Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi; the relics were brought to Rome specifically for prayers during the bishops' discussions about family life.

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