

Zelie's condition proved to be most painful at night, and sleep was difficult. In addition, a ganglion on her neck began to swell, causing additional pain. After a time she could not dress herself and relied on Marie to help her. She continued attending Mass in the morning with her husband, but eventually her weakness was so great that she reluctantly remained at home.

She was to write to her brother, "The disease is becoming worse day by day. The arm on the sore side is almost paralyzed, but my hand and fingers can still hold a needle. Besides, I feel sore, as it were, all over, due to a constant fever for the past two weeks. I cannot stand upright anymore, and must remain seated... These are for me days of salvation which will never return, and I wish to profit from them. Thus I shall have double profit: I shall suffer less by being resigned, and I shall put in part of my Purgatory while here on earth. I beseech you to ask for me both resignation and patience..."

Eventually the tumor began to discharge, and then intestinal troubles and fever presented additional problems. Days later, when a hemorrhage developed, accompanied by a loss of Zelie's voice, her brother's family was summoned. On Tuesday, August 28, 1877 at 12:30 AM Zelie died. The following day, she was buried in the family tomb near her four little ones who had preceded her in death. Much later, after the death of Louis Martin, Zelie's brother, Isidore Guerin, had the family grave moved to Lisieux.

The cause for the beatification of Zelie and Louis Martin was initiated in 1957. They were both declared Venerable on March 26, 1994.

On October 19, 2008 both parents of St. Thérèse were beatified in Lisieux by Jose Cardinal Saraiva Martins, the legate of Pope Benedict XVI.

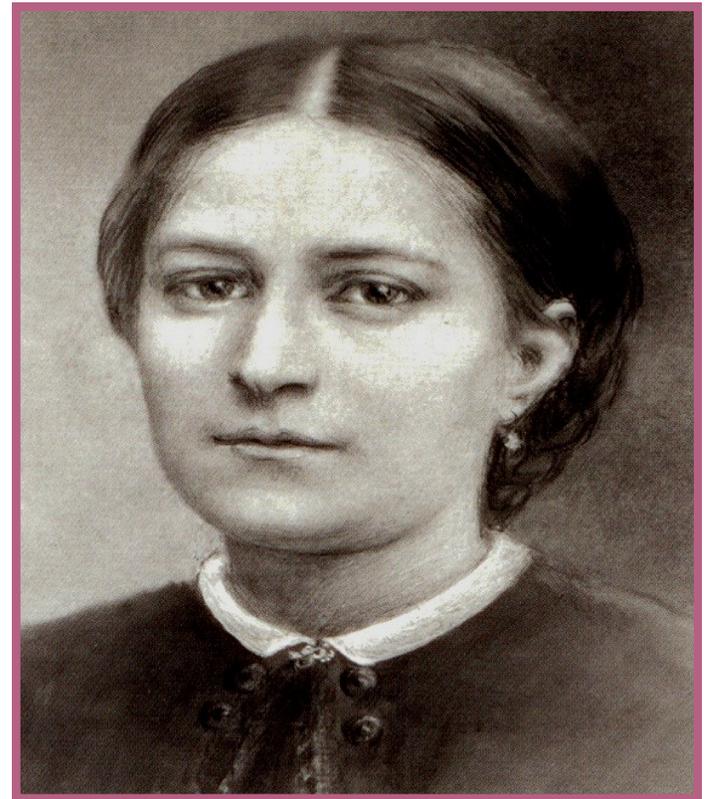


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## ***Heavenly Help for Those Who Suffer from***

### ***Breast Cancer***

***Seek the intercession of  
Blessed Zelie Guerin Martin***



***(1831—1877)***

## **Blessed Zélie Guérin Martin (1831-1877)**

This outstanding mother had one daughter who became a Visitation nun her four daughters who became Discalced Carmelite nuns. One of these was the world renowned St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face. The mother did not see any of her daughters enter religious life, since she died at the age of almost 46, before the girls were old enough to realize their vocations.

Zélie Guérin was born on December 23, 1831 at St. Denis-sur-Sarthon near Alençon, France and was baptized on Christmas Eve. A sister, Maria Louise, was born two years previously and a brother, Isidore, was born ten years later.

By her own account, Zélie did not have a happy childhood. Her mother was very austere in her treatment of her two daughters and did not show affection to them. The father was strict too, but he showed them more kindness. Zélie was later to write that her youth was as "sad as a winding sheet."

At the age of 13, together with her sister, she attended the School of Perpetual Adoration as a day pupil. There, she displayed a keen intelligence and repeatedly won first place for style and composition in her French essays. During these years, Zélie suffered severe headaches as well as respiratory problems, and it was because of the delicate health that the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul would not accept her as a postulant when she applied to join them.

Her sister, Marie Louise, entered the Visitation Convent at LeMans at the age of 29, and her brother, Isidore, studied medicine in Paris and became a pharmacist.

Once disappointed at not being accepted into religious life, Zélie turned to the Blessed Mother and heard an interior voice which said, "Make Point d'Alençon lace." Zélie went to a professional school to learn the trade. She quickly excelled and left to start her own business.

One day when she was crossing the Bridges St. Leonard, Zélie noticed a man passing by and again heard that Interior voice. It said, "This is he whom I have prepared for you." The man was Louis Martin. Louis' mother had noticed Zélie at the lace making school and introduced them. Louis and Zélie were married in 1858, and live in celibacy for ten months, until their confessor convinced them that God intended them to have children. They were blessed with nine children in 13 years, four of whom died in infancy or early childhood.

Zélie had always wanted a son who would someday become a priest. She gave birth to two boys, but both died very young. She was blessed with five daughters who lived past childhood: Marie, Pauline, Leonie, Celine, and her last child, Thérèse – all of whom remembered Zélie as a most loving and caring mother. Therese was only four and a half years old at her mother's death, but she was to write, "God granted me the favor of opening my intelligence at an early age of imprinting childhood recollections deeply on my memory. Jesus in His love willed, perhaps, that I know the matchless mother He had given me but whom His hand hastened to crown in Heaven."

During these childbearing years, while Zélie was overseeing 15 women in her lace making business, she was also attending to her housekeeping and attending Mass every morning with her husband. She was known for her strong faith, incredible energy and great capacity for work. She was also known as being vivacious and witty, as well as an astute businesswoman and a loving and tender mother.

Also during these childbearing years, Zélie was to write to her brother in April 1865, "You know that when I was a girl, I received a blow in the breast, through striking the corner of a table. No notice was taken of it then, but I now have a glandular swelling in the breast which makes me anxious, especially since it has begun to be a little painful... It is not that I would shrink from an operation. I am quite ready to undergo it, but I have not full confidence in the doctors here..." It should be mentioned here that Zélie did not nurse most of the children, but sent them to a wet nurse.

It is unknown why the operation was delayed and the condition not mentioned until several years later. But then the loving Martin family became very concerned when in October 1876 the swelling in Zélie's breast increased and became so painful that she found it necessary to consult a doctor. The examination revealed a tumor in an advanced stage. Zélie knew there was no hope of recovery, but at the insistence of her brother she consulted a surgeon who was a friend of his. The surgeon only confirmed that it was too late for a surgical procedure.

Although the future looked grim, Zélie's faith was unshaken, and she insisted that God could do with her what He pleased. She was resigned to cooperating with His divine will.