

The relics of Saints Louis, Zélie and Therese Martin

By Bishop Gregory Homeming OCD

The relics of St Therese of Lisieux and her parents St Louis and St Marie-Azelie (Zélie) will be taken through a number of dioceses early in 2020. Many people wonder why the Church persists in what seems to be a mediaeval piety, an archaic practice. Why tour the remains of saints and make them available for the veneration of the faithful? Is this an outdated superstition?

Despite the scenes of intense religious devotion around relics, there is certainly nothing magical or talisman like about the relics of saints. Of themselves relics are not holy. It is more correct to say, they are the remains of a holy person, a saint, and on account of their connection to that holy person are revered.

In Australia we are used to caring for and respecting sacred sites. A place may be sacred for a number of reasons. It may be a place of spiritual significance to a people who identify with and are defined by that place; as is the case with many indigenous Australians. It may be a place where an important event took place and now is part of the national identity, such as Gallipoli. It may be a building in which over hundreds of years people have prayed and worshiped, such as a church or cathedral.

We all have souvenirs of people we have loved, insignificant items of little value, but to us they are treasured gems which move us to remember a loved one or an event. When the item attaches to a person it can bring to mind the attributes and goodness of the person. In some cases it can even encourage us to live according to higher values. The relics of saints fall into this category. Relics are physical remains which connect us with the goodness and holiness of the saint. They remind us of the saint and through the saint move us to live better lives.

The saints who are “visiting” Australia are a mother, a father and their daughter. St Louis and St Zélie are the only married couple to have been canonized, and they have a daughter who was called by Pope St Pius X, the greatest saint of the modern times. St Therese, who died in 1897, was a woman of precocious virtue and prayer. She says, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” She shows us that holiness is simple and hidden, it does not seek recognition but turning away from self to God, it makes within the human heart a place for Jesus.

As is the case with Jesus, holiness and goodness does not exist in a vacuum. It has a context. In Jesus’ case the context was the holy family. Extraordinary goodness does not exist in isolation. If you see a good child, you can generally presume that this goodness comes through the parents. Jesus was taught by Mary and St Joseph. St Therese is the daughter of holiness. The Church recognized that goodness is caught, and so investigated her parents, and found two saints.

These three saints show us the integrity of virtue and holiness. The path to holiness is the path of struggle and ordinary life. It is carried and lived with love, and dependence on God. They experienced the mercy of the Father and this mercy crafted the way they lived and loved. In this they are of great relevance for us. They have been where we are, and have together allowed God to perfect them. Being a family, the Martins prove that the family is the seed ground of holiness and goodness. We can learn from them.

Visit one of the churches which will host the relics. Pray and experience the saints. You will experience God and perhaps your life will change. As with a sacred site or souvenir, you can, through the saint, experience and connect with the holiness of God.



Pilgrimage of the Relics of St Therese and her parents Saints Louis and Zélie Martin

to
**Mount Carmel Parish
Mount Carmel Retreat Centre
Carmel of Mary & Joseph**

**23rd January/
1st February 2020**

O God, source of all grace and holiness, look with love on all of us who have prayed at the relics of Saints Louis, Zélie and Thérèse, faithful witnesses to the Gospel of love and joy: may we experience the power of their intercession so that we too may become friends of the Lord and bear abundant fruits of love.

Amen

Carmel of Mary and Joseph
345 St Andrews Road, Varroville 2566.
For enquiries phone: 9820 3048

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish
193 St Andrews Road, Varroville, NSW 2566
For enquiries phone 9603 7373

Mount Carmel Retreat Centre
247 St Andrews Rd, Varroville NSW 2566
For enquiries phone 8795 3400

Thursday 23 January

Solemnity of the Espousals of Mary and Joseph, Titulars of the Monastery

10.00 am

Celebration of the Mass of the Espousals

11.00 am

Veneration of the Relics

(This will be a time of silent prayer, during which you are invited to come pray before the Reliquaries)

12.00 Noon

Join the Community in Prayer

12.30 pm

Veneration of the Relics

4.00 pm

Join the Community in Evening Prayer of the Solemnity

5.00 pm the Chapel will close

There will be no public veneration during the night in our Chapel.

Friday 24 January

Retreat Day for our Secular Order Sisters and Brothers. This day will be reserved for the **private veneration of the relics** by the OCDS members.

Details of the Retreat programme will be published separately

Saturday 25 January

7.30 am Mass and farewell to the relics

Saturday 25 January

11.00 am

Welcome of the relics to Parish

12 noon:

Mass with Bishop Brian

Lunch served for all in Parish Hall

Veneration of the Relics

(This will be a time of silent prayer, during which you are invited to come pray before the Reliquaries. **Please note** that the church will be open to the public for veneration for the entire time the relics are in the Parish)

6.00 pm

Saturday Vigil Mass

Sunday 26 January

Australia Day and Family Day

9.00 am

Celebration of Mass

5.00 pm

Celebration of Mass: (Note time)

Monday 27 January

Public Holiday for Australia Day

9.00 am

Celebration of Mass

5.00 pm

Celebration of Mass

Tuesday 28 January

9.00 am

Celebration of Mass

The Relics will be transferred to Mount Carmel Retreat Centre after Mass

Tuesday 28 January

Reception at Retreat Centre Chapel

Veneration of the Relics

5.00 pm

Evening Prayer with Friars

7.30 pm

Mass in the presence of the Relics

Note: Veneration will end at 10.00 pm each evening and the Chapel closed.

Wednesday 29 January

7.30 am

Mass & Morning Prayer, R C Chapel

5.00 pm

Evening Prayer with Friars

7.30 pm

Mass in the presence of the Relics

Thursday 30 January

7.30 am

Mass & Morning Prayer, R C Chapel

5.00 pm

Evening Prayer with the Friars

7.30 pm

Mass in the presence of the Relics

Friday 31 January

Relics will be taken to Mount Carmel Catholic College for opening Mass of the school year

5.00 pm

Evening Prayer with Friars

7.30 pm

Mass in the presence of the Relics

Saturday 1 February

7.30 am Mass & Morning Prayer, R C Chapel
Transfer of relics to St Mary's Cathedral