

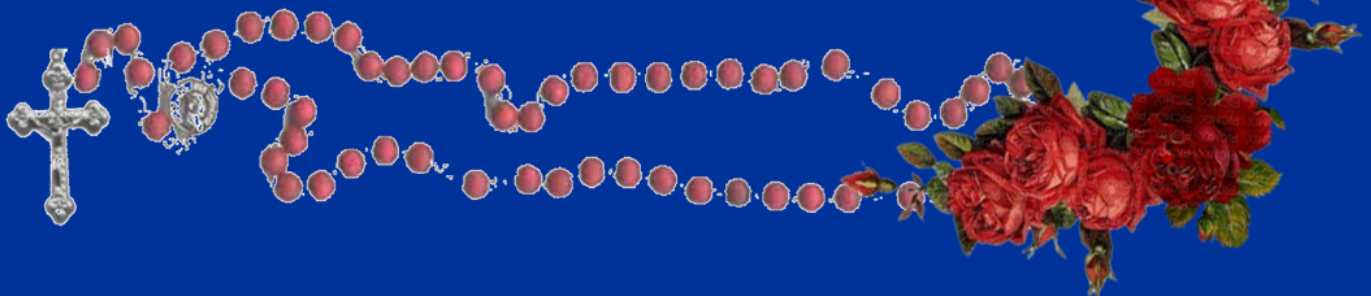


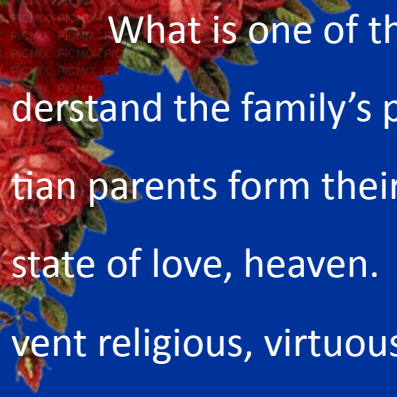
Mary and the Family

What is Mary's relation to the family? A joke may help enlighten us. A little boy asked his father, "Daddy, how did we get here?" His father replied, "We came from an ape after a universe created itself." Then, the little tyke went to his mother. "Mommy, how did we get here?" "Well, son, God created everything but he created us in His image and likeness." "But Daddy said the universe self-created and we evolved from apes." Mom responded, "Son, that is the difference between your father's side of the family and mine."

Although this is a joke and hopefully will cause at least a smile, it is not irrelevant. St. Augustine taught that two kinds of people exist: those who follow the devil, whether they know it or not, and those who follow Christ and His Mother. We can all ask ourselves, "On which side of the human family am I? Am I with Christ and His Mother Mary or Satan?" In God's family Mary plays a leading role. After all, Genesis 3:15 says she steps on the devil and his legions. (Augustine, City of God, Bk. 11, Ch.1)

"Guide in the day of battle" we pray in the St. Michael prayer. Christ, His Mother, the angels, and the saints in heaven and on earth fight the devil who is legion. Over what are they battling? Simply put: souls and the sacred means to these human souls' salvation.



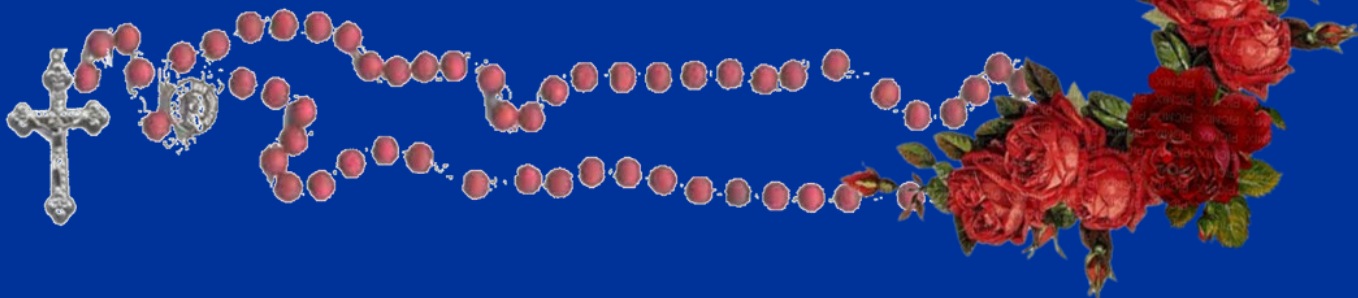


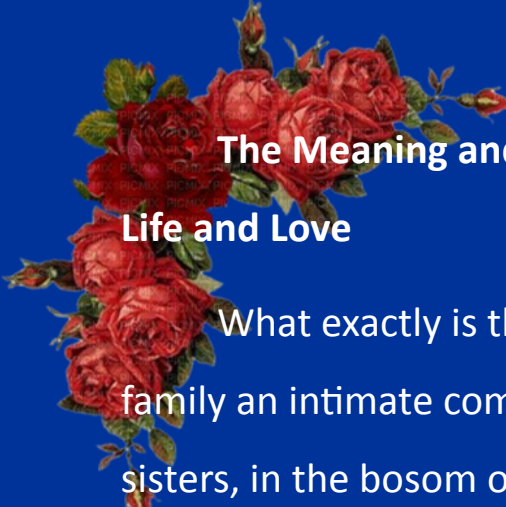
What is one of the most influential channels both armies see? They understand the family's power: the family, that domestic church, in which Christian parents form their children to love and live as Christ and reach the ultimate state of love, heaven. Holy families beget Christian leaders, zealous priests, fervent religious, virtuous parents and selfless single persons who continue God's cycle. More souls are thereby saved by these children.

How does Satan respond to families? With diabolical fury, he strives to form apathetic or even cruel parents, who leave their children confused, hurt, and bitter, with no purpose to their sad lives. These children, as they grow, fall right into the devil's clutches of destroying the family. After all, a family to them consisted of strife, hurt, and in the words of the son of one famous atheist, "hell."

However, Satan does not only entice children from ungodly families, but he furtively insinuates himself into the pro-active Christian family. After all, these families take souls away from him and deserve the most spite. He quietly ignites envy, quarrels, and misunderstanding, such that you and I probably know family members who no longer speak to each other.

Why are both Mary and Satan captivated by the family? In this article we will explore how Mary helps the family. We need to first look at the family's meaning and importance in the plan of God.

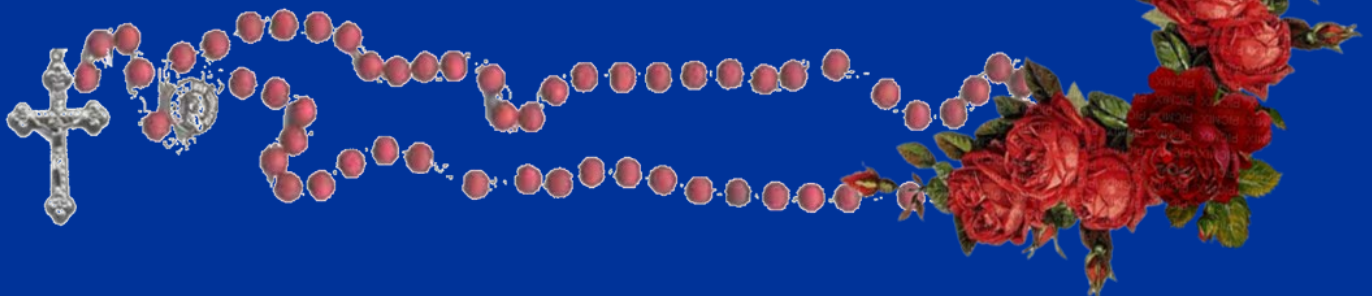


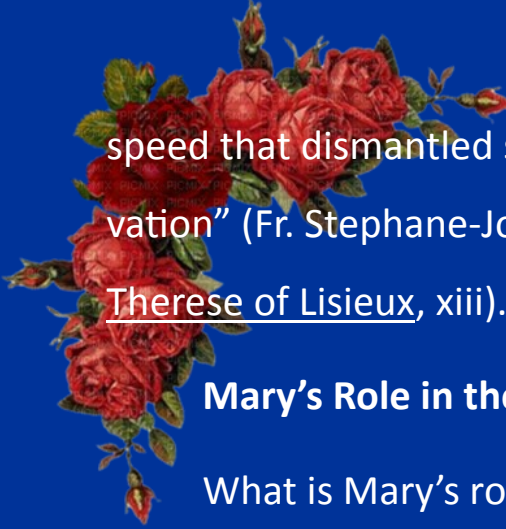


The Meaning and Importance of the Family: Intimate Community of Life and Love

What exactly is the family? The Pontifical Council of the Family calls the family an intimate community of love among parents, children, brothers and sisters, in the bosom of a much larger family, in society and in the Church. Vatican II calls the family the “domestic church” (Lumen Gentium 11). The Pontifical Council for the Family names the family a “school of humanity for our times” (Vatican Information Service, May 16, 2015).

Why is the family important? The standard of the family determines the level of our civilization. Confucius wrote “The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home.” Pope St. John Paul II warns the future of humanity passes by way of the family (“Letter to Families”, February 1, 1995). Pope Francis thought the family such an urgent topic that he not only called a “Year of the Family,” but also created two synods: extraordinary and ordinary, occurring 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 respectively. Since 1994, the Catholic Church has held every three years the International Year of the Family, this year in our own country. Pope Francis recently pointed out that the family was going through a “serious cultural crisis.” (Vatican Information Service, May 25, 2015) St. Therese of Lisieux tells us, from her observations and her own experience, “Civilization is in peril. Society is tottering. Restore with all





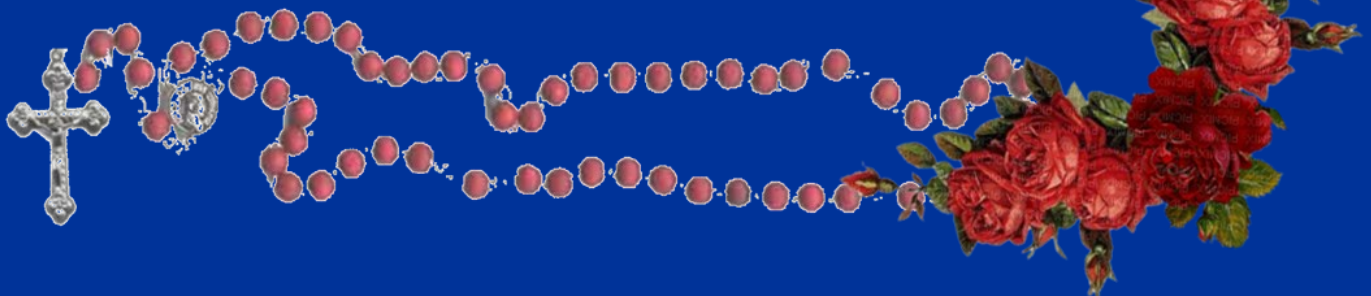
speed that dismantled sanctuary which is the family. Thence will come our salvation” (Fr. Stephane-Joseph Piat, The Story of a Family: The Home of St. Therese of Lisieux, xiii). What would Therese say now?!


Mary’s Role in the Family

What is Mary’s role in the family? Venerable Pope Pius XII taught that the mother is the heart of the family (“Light of the Hearth”, March 11, 1942). In most cases, we can verify this by our own experiences and observations. Mary, the Heart of the Mystical Body, can reign in our individual families, if we let her. As Queen of Peace, she ushers in peace where there is discord; Comforter of the Afflicted, she consoles the suffering members; Health of the Sick, she can provide a cure for those who are ill. We will see how she does this in canonized saints as well as saints among us.

Examples for Today: A Family of Saints

As many of you may know, in addition to his stress on the family, Pope Francis this year will also canonize Zelig and Louis Martin, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux. The Martin family reveals the fruits of fervent grandparents, the attentiveness of uncles and aunts, as well as the leadership of Zelig and Louise. A problem child lived in this family, who was later found to be emotionally abused in a cruel manner by a trusted servant. Zelig had to work, though moth-





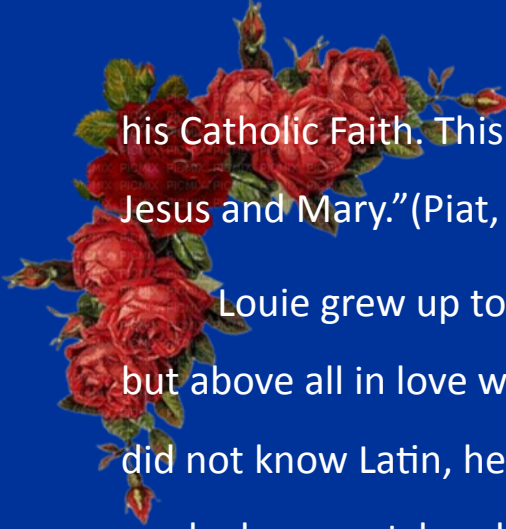
ering always came first, since her work was in the home. Zelig and Louie stand as genuine contemporary role models.

Blesseds Zelig and Louie Martin - *The Martin Heritage*

On the Martin side, it is enlightening to look at Therese's predecessors. An honorable man by the name of Jean Martin and his wife gave birth to little Pierre Martin. Pierre, St. Therese's paternal grandfather, was baptized the same day of his birth. Pierre grew up during the French Revolution and its aftermath, a horrific time period. Persecution, which meant no sacramental life, seemed to only deepen the family's faith. Pierre learned by experience what it meant to be supported by a faith that would not die. On his maternal side, Louis Martin was the grandson of Captain Nicholas Boureau, a soldier who fought side by side in the Vendee Army and whose Vendee chaplain highly praised his piety. (The Vendee Army, a small country group, defended the Catholic Faith against the atheistic French Revolutionists. Many were martyred.) St. Louis de Montfort, the famous Marian preacher, had consecrated to Mary all the Vendee citizens. These zealous people faithfully transmitted to the next generation the Catholic Faith to a heroic degree. Our actions influence not only the present, but the future.

Pierre Martin, Louie's father, for many years continued to serve as a professional soldier. Upon retirement, he used his time to deepen his practices of



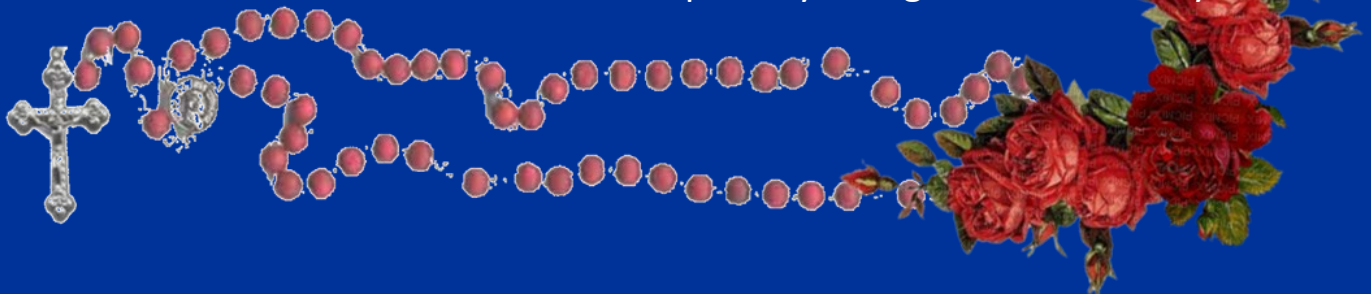


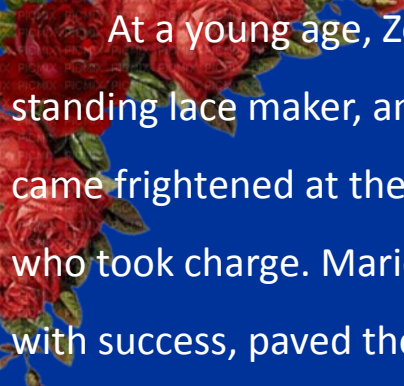
his Catholic Faith. This rugged soldier would sign his letters, “Yours sincerely in Jesus and Mary.” (Piat, 10)

Louie grew up to be a joyful but thoughtful man, handsome and winning, but above all in love with God. He yearned to become a monk, but because he did not know Latin, he was refused. He lived until thirty-five as a bachelor and worked as a watchmaker. Zelig, Therese’s mother, experienced a similar situation. A keenly sympathetic young woman, Zelig wished to join the Daughters of Charity. For some reason, the Superior told her “no.”

What about Zelig, anyway? Zelig’s parents, Isidore and Louise Jeanne, gave birth to three children: Marie Louise, Zelig, and ten years later, the “spoiled child,” Isidore. Her eldest sister, for whom Zelig had the greatest affection, became a Visitation nun.

Zelig, after her being told she was not called to the religious life, prayed that she would enter the married state and that God would give her many children to be consecrated to Him. Her father, however, had no money for Zelig’s dowry. He had to pay for Isidore’s higher education and already fulfilled the dowry requirement for Marie Louise. Zelig had a dilemma: no dowry meant no marriage. She entrusted this problem to Our Lady and heard an interior locution on December 8th, “See to the making of Point de Alencon.” (Piat, 33) Here we see a probable established habit: entrusting a problem to Mary. Do we not have dilemmas that need answer, especially in regard to our family life?

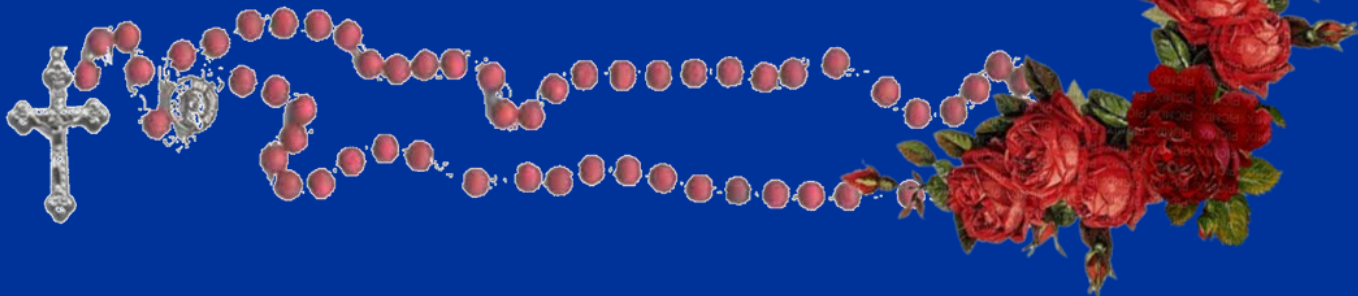


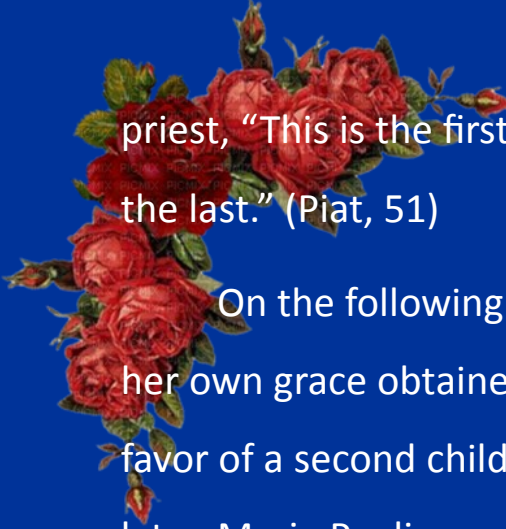


At a young age, Zelig learned the Point de Alencon art, becoming an outstanding lace maker, and then entered a business. However, the young girl became frightened at the new business environment, and it was her older sister who took charge. Marie Louise entered the business with Zelig, and crowned with success, paved the way to Zelig's future accomplishments. However, Marie became deathly sick with the flu. Zelig's beloved older sister had only three months to live, according to the doctor. Marie refused to take this answer and made a novena to Our Lady of La Salette, to obtain the grace of dying as a nun. She lived twenty-two years more and did die as saintly religious. In this example Therese's aunt and Zelig's sister went to Our Lady for a miracle. Is this not what we can do when sickness of all kinds enter our lives, either our loves ones or ourselves? Do we turn to Mary?

At the age of twenty-two, Zelig eventually became the employer of twenty women, and she herself would sew the pieces of the famous Point de Alencon lace, much wanted by the French fashion houses.

Their Marriage and Family Life- When Bls. Zelig and Louie were at last married and prepared for their children, they both decided that the Queen of Heaven would belong in each of their children's names, regardless of their gender. Their eldest would be named after Mary: Marie. Here we see parents who realize the influence of Mary: The Blessed Mother would be the first patroness of every one of their children. After Marie's baptism, Louie remarked to the

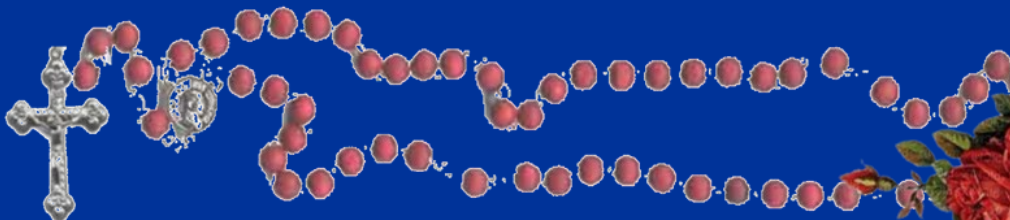



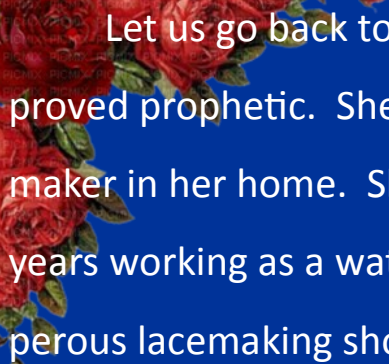


priest, “This is the first time you see me here at the baptistery, but it will not be the last.” (Piat, 51)

On the following feast of the Immaculate Conception, Zelig, remembering her own grace obtained on that day nine years before, asked Our Lady for the favor of a second child. On September 7th of the following year, nine months later, Marie Pauline made her way into the world.

As you recall, Zelig’s “spoiled” brother Isidore went to study in worldly Paris. Louie had lived in Paris for some time, and he experienced both intellectual and sensual temptations. The spirit of Voltaire (no God, no moral absolutes) still reigned, and it was dangerous to a country Catholic boy. Zelig, Isidore’s elder sister, warned him in a letter, “I beg you, Isidore, please do as Louie did: pray and you will not let yourself be carried along by the stream. Please give me a New Year’s gift ...you live near Our Lady of Victories ...very well. Go in, just once a day, and say a Hail Mary to her. You will see that Mary will protect you, and she will make you succeed in this world and give you an eternity of happiness hereafter. This is not an unfounded pious statement. I have good reason to trust in Our Lady. I have received graces from her that I alone know” (Piat, 59). As siblings, do we urge our brothers and sisters to go to Mary? Do we do it as Zelig did: giving a practice proportioned to their spiritual maturity? By the way, Zelig would pepper her letters to Isidore with bantering. Mary guided her to avoid any preachiness.



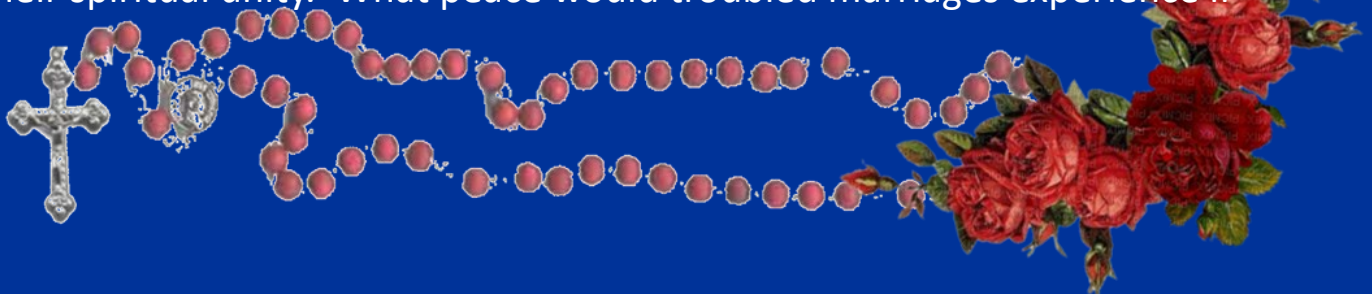


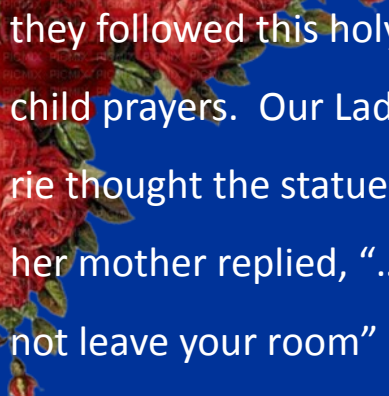
Let us go back to Zelig and Louie. The interior locution Mary gave Zelig proved prophetic. She continued successfully as a businesswoman and lace maker in her home. She would always place mothering first. Louie, after a few years working as a watchmaker, became the business manager of Zelig's prosperous lacemaking shop.

Mary played a primary role in Louie and Zelig's life. Louie erected a large shrine to Our Lady, crowned daily in May. The statue became the famous Our Lady of the Smile. Zelig constantly noted her answers to prayers petitioned through Mary. When France seemed to be in chaos once more, and an archbishop as well as sixty-six priests martyred, Pierre joined a pilgrimage to Chartres, to obtain from Our Lady the grace of peace, joining at least 22,000 other pilgrims. Is this not the best way to obtain peace, by begging the Queen of Peace in our present troubled world?

Above all, Zelig and Louie practiced Mary's fiat. "Real" people, as we say today, their hearts bled, their eyes wept, they cried out in affliction, but always, whether it was a question of separations, illness, bereavements, material uncertainty or spiritual suffering, they imitated Mary's "Be it done according to Your Will." Their docility to God's will became the highest way they honored Mary and put her in their home.

Physically, Our Lady's statue became the family's meeting place and sign of their spiritual unity. What peace would troubled marriages experience if





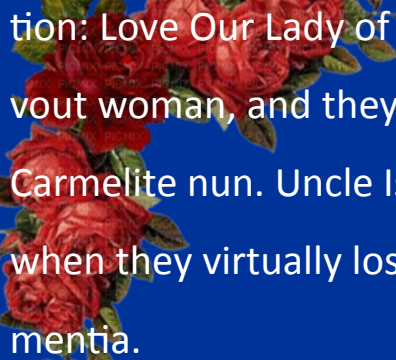
they followed this holy couple's practice! Daily, little Therese knelt to say her child prayers. Our Lady's statue looked down upon the older girls' room. Marie thought the statue too large for the room and wanted a smaller one, but her mother replied, "...so long as I live this statue of our Blessed Mother does not leave your room" (Piat, 149). Do we have statues of Mary in our homes for Mary to look down upon our loved ones?

At the beginning of May the statue became the center of a real oratory, a place of prayer. A background of leaves and flowers adorned the statue, while baskets of flowers were arranged at Our Lady's feet. Nothing was considered too good for Mary. How obviously we can see the love in the hearts of this holy family for Mary, and this Heavenly Mother would outdo any attention given to her.

Pilgrimages played a large role in the Martin family. They regarded public worship as a festival, a need and a joy. Once in a while the family would march to Our Lady of Victories, Chartres, Lourdes and other Marian shrines, and come back enriched with memories forming conversations at home. Often, the Martin family undertook such travels to honor Mary in thanksgiving for a favor or in petition for a recovery.

What happened to Zelig's youngest spoiled brother Isidore? He became a model Catholic. In fact, he erected an altar of repose for the faithful and also enjoyed the prosperity of a respected pharmacist. We can see Zelig's predic-

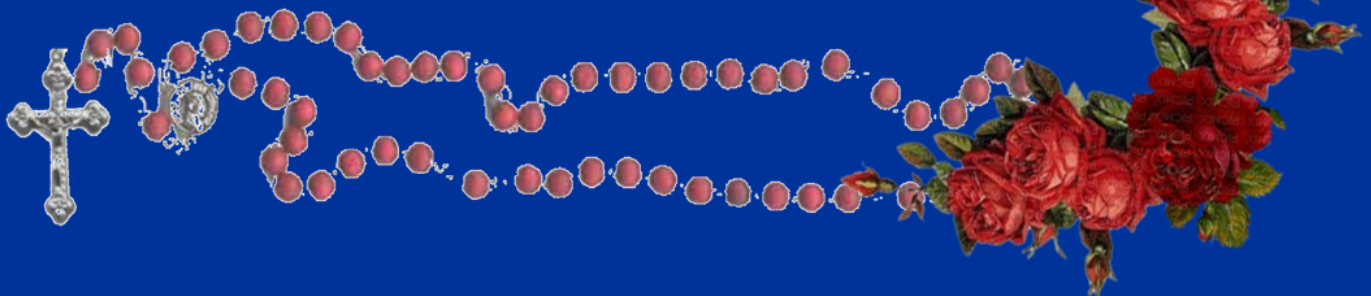


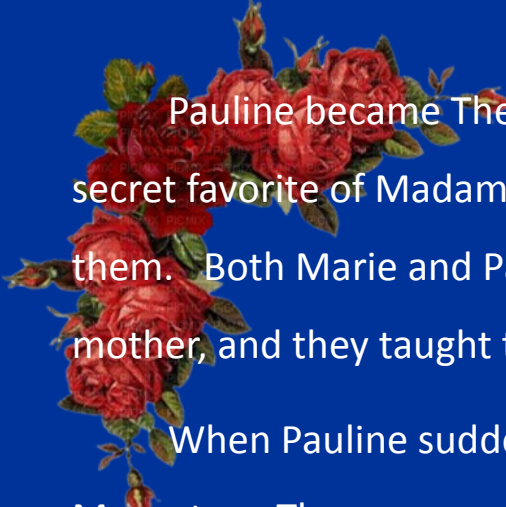


tion: Love Our Lady of Victories, and she will reward you. Isidore married a devout woman, and they brought two girls into the world, one of them becoming a Carmelite nun. Uncle Isidore became a strong support for the Martin daughters when they virtually lost both parents: one to death and the other to severe dementia.

Did Zelig and Louie have an angelic, but passionless relationship, as some may think? Our Lady wants love in matrimony to be real. Zelig wrote to Louie when he was gone on a trip to Paris, "I long to be with you, Louie dear. I love you with all my heart and feel this love doubled by your absence. I could not live apart from you." Louie responded, "I was very pleased to receive your letter....I went to Mass at Our Lady of Victories, which for me is a little heaven. I lit a vigil candle for you and each of our children. Your husband and true friend who loves you forever" (Piat, 177-178). This excerpt does not seem without passion! Zelig and Louie's true love exuded physical, emotional and above all spiritual affection, a human love between a man and woman whose reciprocity affected keenly the holiness of their daughters.

When Zelig, at the age of forty-seven, was suffering her piercing pangs of breast cancer, Louie organized a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes. He, like she, always had recourse to Mary. He did not want to lose his cherished spouse or to see his youngest daughters without a mother. However, sometimes for reasons we do not know, the answer is no.



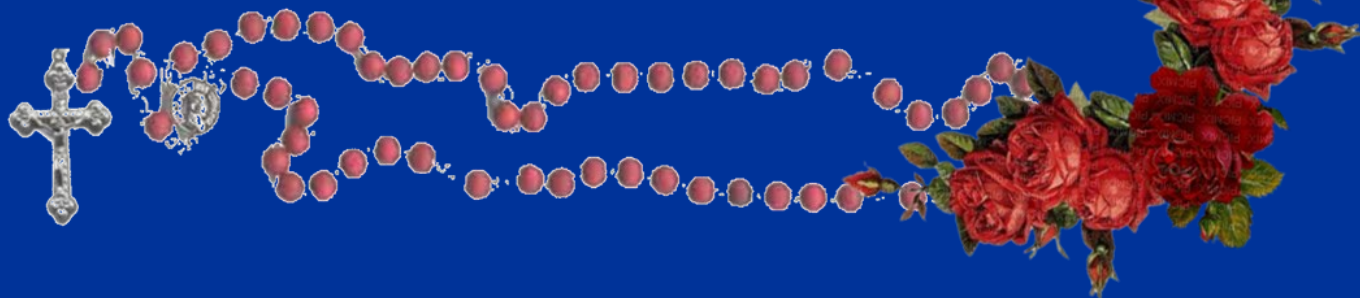


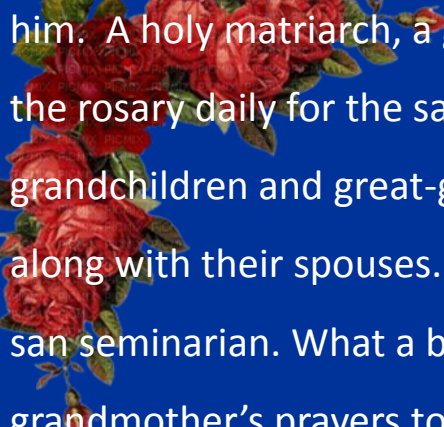
Pauline became Therese's second mother when Zelig died. Pauline was the secret favorite of Madame Martin, and an osmosis of soul took place between them. Both Marie and Pauline learned to make sacrifices for Jesus from their mother, and they taught this practice to Therese.

When Pauline suddenly announced her decision to enter the Carmelite Monastery, Therese experienced another separation anxiety, this time the keenest of all. The violent shock attacked her ten-year-old health. Constant headaches grew into a horrific attack with seizures, hallucinations and incoherent ramblings, which brought Therese to death's door. Louie, who was passionately devoted to his little queen, unceasingly prayed to Our Lady of Victories, one of his favorite devotions. Masses were offered at this Parisian shrine. On May 13th, the statue which held for twenty-five years a strong devotion for the family, came to life, and Mary smiled at her suffering child, Therese. Our Lady overcame the evil power which ravaged the little girl and restored her to health. We can see why St. Therese called Mary more a mother than a queen.

Practical Experiences of Today

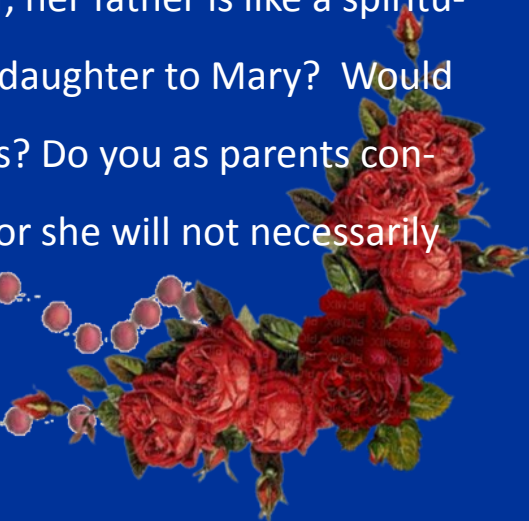
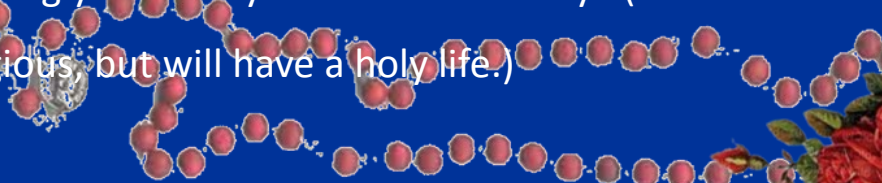
Today, Mary still acts on us ordinary souls, as Therese, Zelig and Louie Martin would call themselves. For example, a dedicated priest of our diocese in a vocation talk admitted to his sneaking a look into his grandparents' bedroom when he was a little boy. It was night and time for him to be in bed, but it was worth the risk: he saw them both on their knees, saying the Rosary. He said that awed

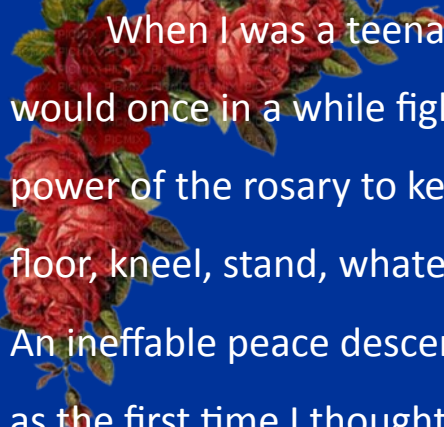




him. A holy matriarch, a great-grandmother of a large clan, once told me, “I pray the rosary daily for the salvation of all my children.” At her funeral, her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren seemed to all receive Holy Communion, along with their spouses. Among her grandchildren are two religious and a diocesan seminarian. What a beautiful testimony to a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother’s prayers to Our Lady.

Parents, undoubtedly, as primary educators, penetrate the hearts of their children the most. Psychiatrists testify to this. Supernaturally, a parent possesses a special grace for fathering or mothering the children. One time in the early years of last century, a young father consecrated his second child, his first daughter, to Our Lady. At the age of twenty, this young woman wished to enter the convent and told first her father. “I knew it,” he responded, “You see, I consecrated you to the Blessed Mother when you were born. Please don’t tell your mother.” That Californian young woman, fiercely devoted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, had prayed daily a Hail Mary since the 7th grade that God would give her a religious vocation. She not only became a leading religious in the Community, but led a group of like-minded Sisters to Wichita, to begin anew to live the IHM Charism. Her name: Mother Joanne, our Foundress in Wichita, and twenty three of us can say we belong to her as her spiritual children. However, her father is like a spiritual grandfather to us. What if he did not consecrate his daughter to Mary? Would she have persevered in her desire to become a religious? Do you as parents consider consecrating your newly born child to Mary? (He or she will not necessarily become a religious, but will have a holy life.)





When I was a teenager with five, going on six other younger siblings, we would once in a while fight over small things. My mother firmly believed in the power of the rosary to keep a family together. So she would allow us to sit on the floor, kneel, stand, whatever, as long as we took our rosaries and prayed together. An ineffable peace descended upon our family, and I attribute that family rosary as the first time I thought of the possibility of God willing me to be a Sister.

Years ago, a large family lost several little children to a fire. I cannot imagine the depth of the grief felt over this. At the funeral Rosary, it was said that a lady came up to them, a woman they had never met. She smiled and said, “It will be all right.” The couple immediately felt an indescribable peace. When they went to look for this woman, she was nowhere to be found. It was commonly believed the woman was our Mother Mary.

Mary, Queen of Peace, wishes to unite our families. The evil one wishes to divide them. Who will you choose? I leave with one saying from Fr. Patrick Peyton, the Rosary priest who experienced a miraculous healing from Our Lady: “The family that prays together, stays together.” The family that prays through Mary’s intercession will definitely stay in love together. Mary, Queen of Families, pray for us.

