



## **Religious member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross.**

**Roman martyrology:** In Montreal, a city of the province of Quebec, St. André Bessette, was a religious member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, who worked tirelessly in building the famous shrine dedicated to St. Joseph in Canada. André Bessette believed not in himself but in the power of God's love for him. In him we can see that God reveals his power shining through our human weakness.

**Canonization date:** October 17, 2010, at Saint Peter's Square in Rome, by Pope Benedict XVI.

### **SHORT BIOGRAPHY**

André Alfred Bessette was born on August 9, 1845, not far from Montreal, Canada. He was the eighth of twelve children. When Alfred was nine, his father, a wood cutter, died in an accident at work. Three years later, Alfred's mother died of tuberculosis, leaving the children orphans; they were split up and placed in different homes. At twelve, Alfred went to live with his aunt and uncle.

Because his family had been so poor and he was often sick, Alfred had very little education. So for the next thirteen years he tried learning different trades like farming, shoemaking and baking. He even worked in a factory in Connecticut, but his health always failed him. At 25 he applied to join the Congregation of the Holy Cross carrying with him a note from his pastor saying, "I am sending you a saint." The Brothers found that difficult to believe and was initially refused due to poor health and lack of knowledge such as reading and writing, but he gained the backing of Bishop Bourget, and was accepted.

He was given the humble job of doorkeeper at Notre Dame College in Montreal, with additional duties as sacristan, laundry worker and messenger. "When I joined this community, the superiors showed me the door, and I remained 40 years," he said. He spent those next forty years as a general maintenance man and messenger in prayer. On his window sill, facing Mount Royal, was a small statue of Saint Joseph, to whom Andre was especially devoted. "Some day," Andre believed,

"Saint Joseph will be honored on Mount Royal." The remaining years of his life were spent as the doorkeeper for the order's college.

Here at college, Brother Andre's healing powers soon became known and began to spread. When people came to ask him for a cure, he would tell them to first thank God for their suffering because it was so valuable, then he would pray with them. He would rub the sick person lightly with oil taken from a lamp burning in the college chapel. Most of them were cured but Brother Andre always refused credit for the healing. He insisted it had been the person's faith and the power of St. Joseph.

Brother Andre's great love for the Eucharist and for St. Joseph made him realize that God wanted a church in honor of St. Joseph. That church was to be built on top of Mount Royale in Montreal, Canada, right where he planned it, prayer and the sacrifices of Brother André and many other people made the dream come true. The magnificent church honoring St. Joseph was built as a testimony to Brother Andre's tremendous faith. Pilgrims came to Mount Royale all year and from distant places wanting to honor the saint and show their trust in his loving care, as Brother André did.

Brother Andre died peacefully on January 6, 1937. Nearly a million people climbed Mount Royale to St. Joseph's Oratory for his funeral in spite of sleet and snow to say good-bye to their dear friend. At his canonization in October 2010, Pope Benedict XVI said that St. Andre "lived the beatitude of the pure of heart."