

LIVING WITH CHRIST THIS WEEK

Sunday, August 22:	Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) - green
Monday 23:	Ferial - green
Tuesday 24:	St. Bartholomew, apostle - red
Wednesday 25:	Ferial - green
Thursday 26:	Ferial - green
Friday 27:	St. Monica - white
Saturday 28:	St. Augustine, bishop, doctor - white
Sunday 29:	Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) - green

Our Saintly and Historical Heritage



9. Brother André

This story begins very modestly with an idea to build a small chapel on a mountain. It would only have a few pews and could accommodate small groups. It would be a place where people could come to pray. It was Brother André's idea. He was the porter at Collège Notre-Dame, a very ordinary job that did not require a diploma or academic qualifications. No one could have predicted that his simple plan would become such an incredible masterpiece. It would be a *presence* that would develop and grow for over a century and even today it has not lost any of its significance.

In fact, St. Joseph's Oratory on Mount Royal occupies a very important place in the faith life of pilgrims from the province of Quebec, Canada and the United States. More than two million visitors and pilgrims visit the site annually to see Brother André and his friend St. Joseph. When we ask pilgrims why they have come to the Oratory, they respond spontaneously that they want to see where Brother André lived. Thus his spirit is very much alive in this holy place and in the hearts and minds of pilgrims.

This sanctuary, situated on the side of Mount Royal offers numerous religious services for pilgrims as well as a welcoming centre, an administrative office, a garden for meditation, a research centre, and provision for accommodations and restaurants. Everything is designed to make pilgrims feel at ease during their spiritual quest.

Who was Brother André? It was said that *he could barely sign his own name and his health was very delicate*. It is amazing to realize how little recognition he had during his lifetime. Yet, his incredible dream became a reality and today he is famous throughout the world and venerated. We often ask for his intercession. Those who have a special devotion to him hope that he will soon be canonized.

Brother André was born Alfred Bessette on August 9th, 1845 at Saint Grégoire d'Iberville. He is one of our Quebec saints. He was the eighth child in a family of twelve. His health was fragile from birth and he was baptized immediately. At the age of nine, his father died, followed three years later by his mother. When he was older, he looked for work in the neighboring villages, and later like many Quebec youth, he worked in the New England textile mills. He returned to Quebec in 1897 and entered the Holy Cross Congregation in 1870. He worked as a porter at Collège Notre-Dame for almost forty years.

Brother André died at the age of 91 on Wednesday, January 6th, 1937, on the feast of the Epiphany and the day dedicated to Saint Joseph. It is interesting to note though he had such fragile health, he lived to be almost one hundred years old. On May 23th, 1982, he was beatified in Rome by Pope John Paul II. Pope Benedict XVI will proclaim him a saint and model for the universal Church on October 17th, 2010.

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Translated by Honore Kerwin Borrelli