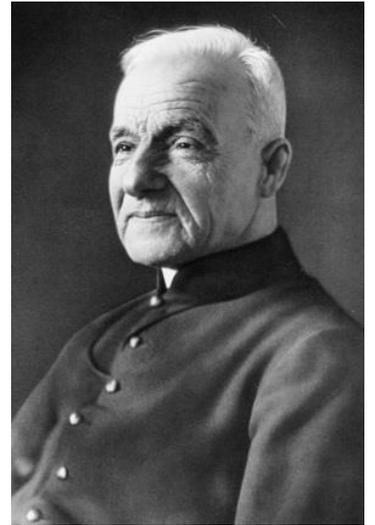


## Saint Andre Bessette (1845- 1937)

### The Miracle Worker of the Shrine of St. Joseph, Montreal, Canada

Feast Day: January 6



In 2010 a new saint was canonized who was called “the Miracle Worker of Montreal.” He was born in on August 9, 1845 and was given the name Alfred Bessette. He was a sickly baby and was baptized immediately for fear that he would die. When he was six years old, his father was killed in a lumbering accident, and his mother raised their twelve children until she herself died of tuberculosis when Alfred was twelve years old. During his early years Alfred went from one job to another in Canada and also in New York, working as a cobbler, as a baker and as a factory worker. But he was always too sickly and clumsy to keep any job for long. The one thing he was good at was praying and doing penance. His sister said that “on Sunday he passed the greater part of the afternoon in the church.” A holy priest named Father Provençal, who had prepared little Alfred for his first Holy Communion had also inspired Alfred with a great devotion to Saint Joseph. He encouraged Alfred to enter the Congregation of the Holy Cross. He wrote a letter of recommendation for Alfred which said: “I am sending you a saint.” Alfred took vows and was given the name “Brother Andre”. He remained a lay brother all his life and never became a priest because he was illiterate and unskilled. He was given the job of doorkeeper at the Holy Cross Boarding School in Montreal. This job suited him well because soon many people came to the door asking for his advice and for his prayers. He always told people to pray to St. Joseph and soon miracles of healing began to happen.

One day, as the pious porter was scrubbing the floor in the parlor of the college, a lady came to see him, having heard of his reputation. She was so afflicted with rheumatism that she could only walk with the assistance of two men supporting her by holding each arm. Her request to Brother André was simple enough: “I am suffering from rheumatism. I want you to heal me.” Not looking up from the floor he was still busily scrubbing, Brother André said to the men assisting her, “Let her walk.” The woman walked out unassisted.

On another occasion a man told Brother André that his wife was sick. Brother Andre said “But she is not so sick as you think. At this very moment she became better.” The man was quite cynical, for he knew that his wife had been ill for many years. Yet upon arriving home he found that his wife had been cured at the very moment Brother Andre had pronounced those words.

Another time Brother Andre visited a student sick in bed. He told the boy to get up: “You’re not sick, you lazy bones! Go and play with the others.” The boy got up completely cured!

The miraculous cures continued. Sometimes there were priests who accused Br. Andre of being a fraud, but some of them were cured of their illnesses and came to believe. Br. Andre was humble, and he always attributed the cures to the intercession of St. Joseph. He often told the people to pray a novena to St. Joseph. Or he would remove oil from the lamps that burned at the altar of St. Joseph and tell people to rub the oil on the part of their body that was ailing. He was so humble that he would say “I am just St. Joseph’s little dog.”

Eventually there were so many sick people coming to see him at the boarding school that parents began to worry that the students would become infected by contagious diseases. The priests ordered Brother Andre to go to the train station and meet the crowds of sick people who arrived from different parts of Canada and the United States. His miracles and his saintly example of a life of prayer and penance, and his gentle words convinced many lapsed and lukewarm Catholics, as well as Protestants, Freemasons and Jews to practice the Catholic faith.

Br. Andre became so famous that many people donated money to fulfill his dream of building the huge shrine called the Oratory of Saint Joseph which now sits on a hill overlooking Montreal.

Brother André died on January 6, 1937 at the age of 91, and more than one million people came to the funeral and streamed past his poor little coffin. To be eligible for sainthood, there must be two miracles. Brother Andre has been credited with more than 125,000 miracles, either before or after his death. He was canonized a saint by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. His Feast Day is January 6.



# St. Joseph: Father and Patron of Us All!

Saint Joseph is the Patron Saint of Many Things:

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of men, husbands and fathers— because he gave a perfect example in the Holy Family in Nazareth. His vocation was to be Father to the Son of God! He had to try to be the visible face of Jesus' invisible Father! Jesus probably imitated Joseph in his mannerisms and now Jesus reigns in heaven in a way similar to the way Joseph rules the home of Nazareth!

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of workers, carpenters, cabinetmakers, craftsmen, confectioners, engineers, house sellers and buyers— because he worked to support and shelter the Holy Family.

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of accountants and those who handle finances— Because he supported the Holy Family in all of their needs.

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of travelers, pioneers, immigrants— because he led the Holy Family on their journey to and from their exile in Egypt.

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of expectant mothers (pregnant women), of single mothers, of women who do not have a man in the home, of nuns and convents— because St. Joseph was the protector and guardian of the Virgin.

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of contemplative prayer- because all of his work and all of his life was a prayer since he did everything for and in the presence of Jesus and Mary.

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of those in doubt— Because he trusted the angel and believed that Mary was an innocent.

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of priests- Because he held the Body of Christ.

-St. Joseph is the patron saint of the following countries: Mexico, New France, Peru, Viet Nam.

Joseph is also patron saint of the Universal Church. In one of the first acts of the pontificate of Pius IX, himself singularly devoted to St. Joseph, was to extend to the whole Church the feast of the Patronage (1847), and in December, 1870, according to the wishes of the bishops and of all the faithful, he solemnly declared the Holy Patriarch Joseph, patron of the Catholic Church, and established the Feast of St. Joseph (19 March) as a Solemnity.

-St. Joseph is the Patron Saint of the dying for three reasons: 1) He is the foster father of the Eternal Judge, who can refuse him no request. 2) He is terrible to the demons; the Church calls him the Terror of demons and Conqueror of Hell. 3) His own death was most beautiful, for he died in the arms of Jesus and Mary. St. Francis de Sales and St. Alphonsus Liguori both said that St. Joseph died of the love of God.

## Devotion to Saint Joseph can help us to be saints!

**St. Teresa of Avila had a mystical experience of being clothed with holiness by Mary and St. Joseph**

"At this same period, on the festival of the Assumption of Our Lady, I was in a monastery of the Order of the glorious St. Dominic, thinking of the many sins which in times past I had confessed in that house and of other things concerning my wicked life, when there came upon me a rapture so vehement that it nearly drew me forth out of myself altogether. I sat down and I remember even now that I could neither see the Elevation nor hear Mass being said, and later this caused me a certain amount of scruple While in this state, I thought I saw myself being clothed in a garment of great whiteness and brightness. At first I could not see who was clothing me, but later I saw Our Lady on my right hand and my father Saint Joseph on my left, and it was they who were putting that garment upon me, I was given to understand that I was now cleansed of my sins. When the clothing was ended, and I was experiencing the greatest joy and bliss, I thought that Our Lady suddenly took me by the hands and told me that I was giving her great pleasure by serving the glorious Saint Joseph and that I might be sure that all I was trying to do about the convent would be accomplished... Our Lady then seemed to throw round my neck a very beautiful gold collar, to which was fastened a most valuable cross."

