

“I Am Sending You a Saint”

Brother André was born Alfred Bessette in 1845 in Quebec, Canada. An unlikely candidate for sainthood in an active religious community of teachers, the orphaned Alfred was physically frail throughout his life and remained largely without formal education. As a young man, he spent several years as a laborer on farms, in mills, and in various trades throughout New England and Canada, but his poor health made work difficult. Yet

his faith was always constant, as was his great love for St. Joseph.

Knowing of his piety, Alfred’s pastor in Quebec encouraged him to join religious life and sent him to a nearby community of Holy Cross brothers with a letter boldly telling its superior, “I am sending you a saint.” Becoming a religious brother, Alfred took the name Brother André.

Educators in the Faith

Blessed Basile Moreau founded the Congregation of Holy Cross to serve the needs of the Church through educating both mind and heart. Although he did not have much formal education, Brother André was an exemplary “educator in the faith.” He never exercised a ministry as a teacher, but he taught the faith to thousands. He loved to spend time talking with people about St. Joseph and about the Lord’s Passion, teaching them to pray by lovingly praying with them. His consistent faithfulness underscores our obligation and opportunity to educate in the faith in every aspect of life.

What Is a Brother?

From the earliest days of the Church, men and women have consecrated themselves to Christ through lives of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. These consecrated religious have made their entire lives a sign to the world of the Kingdom of God.

For all consecrated religious, the culmination of their “yes” is their profession of vows, committing their life to Christ in their religious community forever. Some professed religious serve as priests. There are also male religious called to the vocation of a brother. The vocation of a religious brother is complete in and of itself, lived through his vows and his dedication to prayer, community, and service.

In service to the Church, the Brothers of Holy Cross answer Christ’s call to go out to all the nations and make the Gospel known. They do this primarily as teachers, administrators, or directors in the schools, parishes, and missions of Holy Cross around the world. In their “yes” to Christ’s invitation to follow him, they make themselves radically open to serving the needs of the Church and the world.

Together, the brothers and priests of Holy Cross share a common life, common prayer, and participate equally in common works. Together they are a sign of the Kingdom to the world.

Prayer

*Lord our God, friend of the lowly,
you gave your servant,
Brother André Bessette,
a great devotion to St. Joseph
and a special commitment
to the poor and afflicted.
Through his intercession,
help us to follow his example
of prayer and love
and so come to share with him
in your glory,
We ask this in the name of
Jesus the Lord. Amen
Brother André, pray for us.*

BIOGRAPHY

Born on August 9, 1845, Alfred Bessette entered the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1870 and took the name Brother André. As doorkeeper in one of the Congregation’s schools, he fostered devotion to St. Joseph among the sick and otherwise afflicted and soon became known as the “Miracle Man of Montreal.” In 1904, he founded a simple shrine that would later become the world-renowned St. Joseph’s Oratory. Brother André died on January 6, 1937, and one million persons paid him a last homage. He was beatified on May 23, 1982, and will be canonized in Rome on October 17, 2010.

