

JANUARY 6, 2025 FATHER JOHN BERTAO

Happy New Year.

Yesterday, we celebrated the Epiphany, and today, we celebrate the memorial of Saint Andre Bessette, and I give thanks for the memory of my Mom, who went home on this day, four years ago. Gone, but never forgotten.

Just a point of clarification, in the universal calendar, January the 6th is the same day as the Epiphany of the Lord. Therefore, in Canada, the feast day of Saint Andre Bessette is suppressed for another day every year to the following day. And for the record, Saint Andre died on January the 6th, 1937. And I am sure-- I am sure he will not mind us celebrating his memorial one day later, giving room for the Lord, of course, who he loved so much.

I'll share with you some information on Saint Andre Bessette that I learned from one of my favourite books that I read on a regular basis, called "The Life of the Saints." It tells me-- it tells us, Saint Andre was born on August the 9th, 1845, not far from Montreal. And given the name Alfred by his parents. He was the eighth of 12 children. His father died in an accident at work, and his mother died three years later of tuberculosis. The Bessette family were placed in different homes, and Alfred went to live with his aunt and uncle.

Because of his family-- because his family had been so poor, he was often sick, and our saint had very little education. For the next 13 years, he tried various jobs, such as farming, baking, factory work, and others, however his poor health kept him from continuing to work in any trade that he tried, no matter what. At the age of 25, he joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross and chose the name Brother Andre. Brother Andre spent the next 40 years as a general maintenance man and

messenger. The remaining years of his life were spent in the, uh-- as a doorkeeper for his congregation's college.

Now, here, Brother Andre became known as a healing power, known for his healing power. When people came to ask him for a cure, he would tell them first to thank God, important for us, first, thank God for their suffering because suffering is very, very valuable. Then he would pray with them. Most of all, he prayed and prayed and prayed, and many, many were cured. Also, he learned that-- I learned that Brother Andre always refused to accept any credit for the healing. Instead, he insisted that cures were done through the person's faith in God, and intercession, the intercession of Saint Joseph, to whom he was very faithful.

Also, Brother Andre had a great love for the Eucharist, as well as Saint Joseph. And more of a personal note, as to the Oratory in Montreal, in Quebec, Montreal, Quebec, that is well-known by pilgrimages and pilgrims to have devotion to Saint Joseph, it is said that when Saint Andre was younger, he dreamed that he saw a big church, but could not tell where that church was. Little by little, he came to realize that God wanted a church built in honour of Saint Joseph, his dreams and prayers. So, today, we are blessed to have a magnificent Oratory in Montreal, honouring Saint Joseph, as a testimony to Brother Andre's great unfailing faith.

Many people from all over North America visit this beautiful place, this amazing structure, to pay honour to Saint Joseph and ask for specific cures for healing. Every time I go there, I am amazed at what this man, through God's inspiration, was able to put together. So, as I said-- as I mentioned, I too have visited the Oratory a number of times. You see, as a family, the four of us would spend some of our summer vacation driving to Montreal to visit with our own family who was also there, and

always, always, every time we went to Montreal, the Oratory was the number one place to go. We'd go there at the beginning of the vacation, in the middle, and after. There, we would spend some private time in thanking God for the blessings given us, all the blessings. Especially for the blessings of family and the blessing of being so lucky and blessed to live in this beautiful country called Canada.

Speaking of joy, very soon, we will have the first parish in Ontario dedicated to Saint Andre Bessette. Its construction is being organized by my colleague Father Peter Choi, who is also one of the celebrants of the Daily TV Mass.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, as we continue with our Eucharist on this 6th day of January, let's be mindful. Mindful that Jesus, that Jesus of the Epiphany reveals himself to us at every mass, in the form of bread and wine. Therefore fulfilling his promise in stating, "I will be with you until the end of the ages," and he is so much present amongst us.

Let us then, if you could, open your hearts. Open your hearts, always, at every Eucharist. Whether it is virtually, now, because God creates wonderful, wonderful miracles through the virtuality of the TV, or in person, when you happen to go to Mass in your local parish. Or receiving Jesus through a minister coming to visit you. Open your heart in a very special way to, uh, all the angels and saints, and especially when you receive Jesus or see him, to realize that with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, we are united in one.

Whether it's a church building, whether it's a small church you attend, whether it's a chapel, no matter where it is, where Jesus is in the blessed sacrament, there is Jesus, Mary, and Joseph together, giving you peace.

And most of all, as Saint Andre would say, pray, pray. Give thanks to God for the blessings given you. Especially-- and I know some of that

too, the blessing of having pain. Of suffering physically, sometimes. Of suffering emotionally, because you're not alone. You give thanks to God, and offer it up. Maybe-- maybe for less time spent in the-- in Purgatory. Don't forget to pray and give thanks, because you are not alone. You are loved very much. God bless you.