

JANUARY 6, 2026 FATHER JOHN BERTAO

If you haven't heard it before, today that is, Merry Christmas! We're still very much in the Christmas season, of course, we know that very well, that Christ/Christmas, he's always with us, and what great company to have.

When I found out that I would be celebrating this holy Eucharist for you, on the Memorial of Saint Andre Bessette, I was delighted to share some highlights of this saintly man, who I learnt about as a child, when we first came to Canada.

When I shared my good news with my colleague Father Peter Choi, he reminded me that in Canada, we celebrate Saint Andre Bessette on the 7th of January, not on the 6th. So, I sort of had to convince him that I would really like to talk about Saint Andre Bessette, and he goes, "No, no, no, no, no. No, Father, you can't do that, because I am building a parish in the name of Saint Andre Bessette, in honour of Saint Andre Bessette. You gotta pick somebody else."

Ha. So, I thought, "Okay! I am obedient to Father Peter. Most of the time..."

He tells me that he will try—he will do his very best, I'm sure he will, to give you some good highlights on that saintly man, Saint Andre Bessette. Tomorrow, he celebrates the Mass with him for you. But, just in case Father Peter does not get too much into it may I just say a couple things.

So, it's worth, first of all, for a two- or three-day trip to Montreal, Canada. And spend some quality time in that wonderful, wonderful oratory. Perhaps, I believe, the biggest church in Canada. It's rich in

memories and very conducive to prayer. So you might want to give it a try sometime, when you can.

On one of my last trips to the oratory, just a few months ago, I was with two other priests. We shared some wonderful memories, and of course, on the mystery that we have together. I enjoyed the trip so much that I want to return to Saint Joseph's Oratory as many times as I can. Every time I go there I learn something new. It's like a hunger for good company. For good food that they also have in those beautiful restaurants around the oratory. And of course, rich time in prayer.

In today's readings we realize that nothing can satisfy the deepest longing and desire of the heart, except God himself. He's there in Montreal, he's also here, and he's with you, very, very much so. So, do you believe that this is true, and I hope you do?

Of all the miracles Jesus did, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes are the only one which is repeated on all four Gospels. A great crowd of people had gathered to hear Jesus, because they were hungry for God's word. Jesus' disciples had wanted to send the crowd away, and at the end of the day, because they did not have the resources to feed them. They even complained how much money it would take to feed such a great crowd. At least six months' wages.

Jesus did the unthinkable. He took the little food that they had, only five loaves and two fish, and giving thanks to his Father in heaven, he blessed and distributed this meagre portion to the vast crowd. To the amazement of all, there was more than enough food for everyone to eat and have leftover.

Although my mother, and my parents, we were far, far from being rich, I remember her, even though she's gone home five years ago today, I still have fond memories of the times that we shared as much as we had with

other people, she always had the simple wisdom of sharing and caring for others. You see, although, again, we were far from being rich, my parents always found a way to help someone in need.

Mom and Dad used to say, “When you share with others out of love,” share from the heart out of love, “God multiplies what you share.” Be it food, clothing, or even our home, as we did many times for new arrivals to Canada. Sharing is good. And it’s one way of pleasing others, and, of course, pleasing God.

According to my parents it was another way of praying. Praying from the heart. And sharing what we have received. Everything we have, got in here, comes from God.

As the Christmas season continues, can you share with someone something you have received? For example, a phone call to someone who may be alone. How about a simple “hello” to a neighbour? Or, if you are able to visit someone who is not able to leave the home, please do it. You choose. Do it from the heart, and God will provide the compensation that you are looking for, to have a beautiful, happy, successful life, until we get up to the gates of heaven, and we all meet one day. With great joy, and no tears.

Let us pray together.

Lord Jesus Christ, you satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts, and you feed us with the finest of wheat. Fill me with gratitude for your blessings, and give me a generous heart that I may freely share with others what you have given me. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.