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## **Pastor's Weekly Message:**

Feast of the Epiphany ~ Sunday, January 5, 2020

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Tomorrow is January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany. January 6 is also the day on which Br André died in 1937. Because liturgically January 6 is *always* celebrated as the Epiphany, the Community of Holy Cross perpetually moves the date of liturgical celebration to Jan. 7 (sorry St Raymond of Pennafort!!). So with St Andre Bessette being celebrated early in the calendar year and in the midst of all the celebrations of the Christmas Season, I have been giving a lot of thought and prayer directed toward Br. Andre: his life Mission, and his legacy that we honor every day at our church on Burnside. I am struck by some of the parallels between our ministry here at St Andre Bessette Church and the life of Br André.

Br André knew great suffering in his life. He nearly died at birth, and was always plagued by poor health that left him weak and fragile. When he was 9, his father died in a logging accident, and three years later, Br André lost his mother to tuberculosis; becoming an orphan by age 12. I think that it is worth pondering the fact that Br André's young life was marked by many of the tragedies and poor health issues that factor into the lives of so many who come to our church's Hospitality Programs every day.

Fast forwarding a bit to the early stages of Br André's ministry of prayer, spiritual direction, and healing in the name of St Joseph, it was in 1904 (a mere 15 years before the establishment of the Downtown Chapel in Portland) that Br André was given permission to build a small chapel *across the street* from Notre Dame College where he served as Porter. Why was he granted this permission? Well, to put it plainly, people at the school (parents and staff) did not like the fact that so many "sick" people were coming to Br André, and they much preferred that he meet with these people *away from* the front door of the school! So, permission was granted to build a tiny chapel across the way on Mount Royal lest anyone at the school "catch" something.

The people that sought out Br André were the physically and spiritually wounded, much like our sisters and brothers of the streets and shelters that we reach out to in our parish ministry. The poor and the afflicted were an "eyesore" to the school, yet with Br André they found welcome, comfort, and healing. So like Br André before us, the poor and afflicted of Portland who dwell on the "bad side" of Burnside, those who are branded as an eyesore to *our* local community, through our ministry here at St André Bessette, they also can find welcome, dignity, compassion, comfort, and hopefully some kind of healing; even if that healing is in the form of a restoration of dignity and human worth.

When you think about it, there are many Providential parallels at work in the life of St André and the life of our parish. Since I do not have enough space in my little column to share all of my thoughts, I will conclude these reflections next week.

~ Fr. Tom Gaughan, CSC

