
Pastor's Weekly Message:

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord ~ Sunday, January 12, 2020

In the wake of the Feast Day of St André Bessette, last week I shared a few reflections about the parallels that can be seen between the life of Br André and the mission and ministry of our parish. In this week's article, I would like to conclude those reflections. And on this weekend as we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the *Lord*, my hope is that by reflecting on the life of our parish's patron saint whose life is honored by the Church as being an exemplary life of faith, we who strive to carry out St André's legacy of service to the poor and the afflicted may recommit our lives to the fulfilling the Baptismal Promises that we have made.

One of the interesting parallels between the life of Br André and our parish is that as Br André's ministry of hospitality grew to attract hundreds of people who were seeking relief from the burdens of physical and spiritual maladies, the school where André ministered as Porter grew more and more uncomfortable with the "type" of people that the holy Brother was attracting. In much the same way that for decades on end the city of Portland has seen Burnside as being the great divide between civility and riff raff; safety and danger, and that for so many in the local community the solution to the "eyesores" of homelessness is to avoid the area, the solution to the "Br André Problem" was to move all the "unsightly" out of view so to be able to avoid them. So the plan was developed to build a tiny chapel for Br André and to move him across the way: far enough away that the school (parents and staff) did not have to deal with the unsightly folks who would seek out Br André.

In God's Wonderful Providence, such a decision would lay the groundwork for something greater. Fear of the "sick and broken" and not having to deal with the unsightly, might have been the motivation behind the decision to build a tiny chapel and move Br André away, but in God's Providence, this move and the tiny structure that was built would sew a powerful seed that would first result in a church being built in 1917 to honor St Joseph (that had a capacity of 1000), and then in 1924, after many years of prayers from Br André and his trust that God would provide a GREAT place to honor St Joseph, there began the construction of the majestic Oratory of St Joseph that sits atop Mt Royal in Montreal this very day!! Today, over 2 million pilgrims and tourists visit the Oratory each year.

From the humble beginnings of a poor orphan, Br André grew in faith and trust in God's providence to become a Saint. From the humble beginnings of a tiny chapel grew the majestic Oratory of St Joseph.

In the life of St André, we can draw inspiration from the Power of God's Providence at work in the world. And as we begin the second century of ministry in Portland as the Community of St

André Bessette, we can look ahead with wonder and confidence at how God's Providential Love will work through us as it did our Patron!!