

Bulletin Article for the Nineteenth Sunday in OT

August 9, 2020

On **August 9, 1845**, Alfred Bessette was born to Isaac and Clothilde Bessette, the eighth in what would become a family of twelve children. The Bessettes were a poor French Canadian family who lived in the farming village of St. Gregoire, thirty miles from Montreal, and about the same distance from the border of the United States. Isaac and Clothilde were devout Catholics who, by their own example, taught their children the virtuous habits of prayer and hard work, habits which were to become for little Alfred the key to his ultimate sanctity as Brother André.

As a young boy, young Alfred came into contact with the priest who proved to be the worthy spiritual tutor of a saint, Father André Provençal, the Curé of Saint Césaire. It was Father Provençal who instructed little Alfred for his first Holy Communion. It was Father Provençal who inspired a devotion to Saint Joseph. And it was also this holy parish priest who put Brother André on that road which, for him, would end in perfection — the road to a religious vocation.

The Holy Cross Brothers. In 1820, Father Jacques François Dujarie founded an association meant to provide sacristans and teachers for the parish priests of France. Such men were sorely needed, for the Masonic French Revolution had suppressed the religious orders in France, depriving the faithful of teachers and the parish priests of the assistance they needed from brothers and nuns. Many religious were martyred for the Faith during the Reign of Terror.

Father Dujarie was a parish priest in a village near Le Mans, France, and founded his association there. He called these men the Brothers of Saint Joseph. Fifteen years later, he put his brothers under the care of Canon Basile Moreau, who had just founded a group of priests called the Auxiliary Priests. Two years after that, in 1837, the Congregation of the Holy Cross was formed. So, since the very beginning of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the Patron Saint of the Holy Cross Brothers has been St Joseph.

It is somewhat Providential that young Alfred Bessette who, early on in his life, had a strong prayer life and who developed a strong devotion to St Joseph by the example of his parish priest would join a Religious Community whose Patron Saint is St Joseph. It was in his formation with Holy Cross that Alfred received the Religious name of Br. André, and after his time at the Novitiate, Br. André received the obedience of Porter at a school in Montreal (Notre Dame du

Sacré Coeur). Since the school was located near Mount Royal, Br André often prayed while looking across the way at the beautiful mount and for a long time had a dream of honoring St Joseph with the erection of a place of worship that would be grand enough to honor so great a Saint. Because of his many efforts, through prayer and determination at creating and maintaining the interest of benefactors, Br André is credited with the building of the magnificent Oratory of St Joseph atop of Mount Royal in Montreal.

From its very beginning, the Oratory of St. Joseph, which is a place of international pilgrimage, has been staffed by Priests and Brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross. And on this Aug 9, 2020, the new Rector of the Oratory will be formally installed. Fr. Michael Delaney, csc will formally begin his ministry this weekend. Fr. Mike is an Ordination classmate of mine, and he and I have talked about forming some kind of special bond between our parish that honors St Andre, and the Oratory to St Joseph that, by the Grace of God, Br André inspired to be built.

So, on this the 175th Anniversary of the birth of St André, as Fr. Mike Delaney is installed as Rector at the Oratory, let us join our prayers with the Community at the Oratory to ask for the intercession of Br André to bless and guide Fr Mike Delaney in this important ministry that he is undertaking. May God Bless and protect Fr. Mike, and HAPPY BIRTHDAY, St André!!!!

~Fr. Tom Gaughan, csc