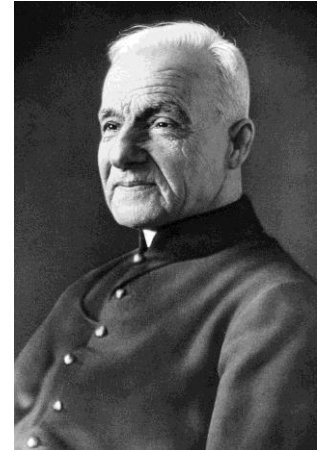


Saint Brother André, CSC (1845–1937)

Alfred Bessette was born on August 9, 1845 at Mont-Saint-Grégoire (Quebec). He was the ninth of 13 children. He was so frail when he was born that he was baptized the following day. In 1855, when he was only ten years old, he lost his father in an accident at work and two years later his mother died of tuberculosis. He was taken by his maternal aunt and then by the mayor of Saint-Césaire, Louis Ouimet, who made him work on his farm.



In October 1863, hoping to find work fitting his constitution, Alfred took the train to New England. He returned to Quebec four years later and moved back to live at the home of Louis Ouimet who introduced him to his cure André Provençal, telling him about his desire to enter religious life. Abbé Provençal encouraged him and talked to him about the Congregation of Holy Cross. On November 22, 1870, Bessette showed up at the Collège Notre-Dame, in Côte-des-Neiges (Montréal) where the Congregation of Holy Cross had recently opened its noviciate.

The congregation's superiors hesitated, however, to accept him into religious vows in 1872 because of his poor health. After speaking with Mons Ignace Bourget, who reassured him, shortly after the new master of novices recommended him saying: "If this young man becomes unable to work, he will at least be able to pray well". Permitted to take his temporary vows, Brother André made his final vows February 2, 1874. Some of the visitors whom Brother André welcomed at the school began to declare that they had been cured because of his prayers and intercession to Saint Joseph. The little brother's reputation spread and in 1900 he was asked to see the sick in a shelter across from the school.

With the help of friends and many donations, Brother André was able to accomplish the project he cherished of building a chapel to St Joseph there. The Sanctuary was inaugurated in 1904 and had to be enlarged four times between 1908 and 1912, because the number of pilgrims continued to increase.

Brother André died on January 6, 1937. More than one million faithful came to his funeral. He was beatified in 1982 and canonised on October 17, 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI.

LINK:

<http://www.saint-joseph.org>