

Life

St. André was born in 1845 in Quebec. He was poor and without education. He became an orphan at the age of 12. He tried to learn many trades, but because he was short and frail, he was unsuccessful. At the age of 18, he moved to the United States to work in a textile factory. After he returned to Canada, he applied to join the Congregation of the Holy Cross at the age of 25. As he was illiterate and frail, he was rejected at first, but the bishop supported him, and he was admitted and became Brother André. He worked as the porter of the College of Notre Dame in Montreal for 40 years. In addition to being a door-keeper, he was also responsible for laundry and cleaning tasks. Brother André often ministered to the sick and met people with disabilities and prayed with them. He had a strong devotion to St. Joseph; many people who were cured through the intercessions of Saint Joseph and Brother André repented or became fervent afterwards. Based on word of mouth and the testimony of these people, a continuous flow of people came to Brother André. Because of these crowds and their claim that Brother André could heal through prayers, protests were raised from parents of the college, his superiors and doctors at the time. He humbly and silently accepted the criticisms and humiliation. Brother André had a dream to build a chapel to honour St. Joseph. In 1904, with the help of some friends, he built a wooden chapel in Mount Royal, and people flocked to there for healing. After they were healed, they left their crutches behind as evidence. This little church later expanded to become Saint Joseph's Oratory, one of Canada's famous shrines. From someone who had been frail since childhood, Brother André lived to 91 years old; the whole nation mourned on the day of his death. To this day, less than twenty people have been canonized in Canada, and Brother André is one of them. Because the ministry of ushers in parishes can be traced back to the early church "porters", it is extremely appropriate for ushers to have Brother André, who worked as a porter for 40 years, as their patron saint.



Reflection

St. André was short, frail, illiterate and low in status, but he was chosen by God to do great things. Through him, countless people were cured in body and mind. During the papal mass for the canonization of Brother André on October 17, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out his extraordinary features in the homily: "With very little education, he had nevertheless understood where the essential of his faith was situated. For him, believing meant submitting freely and through love to the divine will. Wholly inhabited by the mystery of Jesus, he lived the beatitude of pure of heart, that of personal rectitude. It is thanks to this simplicity that he enabled many people to see God...For him, everything spoke of God and of God's presence. May we, in his footsteps, seek God with simplicity in order to discover him ever present in the heart of our life! May the example of Brother André inspire Canadian Christian life!" Let us learn the saint's simplicity and humbly be the tools of the Lord.

Prayer

The webpage of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops pointed out that Brother André prayed constantly: "Prayer was at the heart of his healing ministry. He prayed with the sick and involved them in praying, inviting them to reconciliation with God. He regularly prayed well into the night. He meditated on the passion of Jesus, and saw the suffering of Jesus in the suffering people who came to him for help. Like Moses on the mountain, he spent hours in intercessory prayer on behalf of those who asked him to talk to God on their behalf, often at the foot of the crucifix and before the Blessed Sacrament. That is where he found the courage, the patience, and the serenity to carry on his ministry of welcome." Let us learn from Brother André to pray for others and from prayers, find power to serve others.

May we learn the simplicity and sincerity of Brother André, that we may be more sensitive to the presence of the Lord.

We also pray for the ushers. St. André, pray for us.