

# André Bessette

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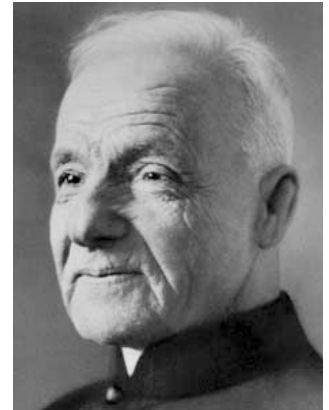
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*André Bessette, who was born in Quebec and worked the mills of New England for a time, came to be known as the “Miracle Man of Montreal.”*

Brother André (1845-1937), known for his devotion to St. Joseph, worked hard but was plagued by ill health. He joined the Brothers of the Holy Cross in 1870 and because of his sickly nature, was assigned to be the doorman at a boys' school in Montreal.

When he visited the sick or when people with afflictions came to the school, Brother André would suggest they pray to Joseph. Many improved. Word spread quickly, and visitors flocked to the school. Brother André was credited with thousands of cures – although he was always quick to say they were the work of St. Joseph.

In 1904 Brother André began collecting money for a shrine to St. Joseph on a nearby hill. The coins he collected, along with his prayers and providence, allowed for construction of a magnificent shrine that still stands today. Whether at the school or ministering to those in need, Brother André remained singularly focused on one thing: doing God's work. This simplicity – a stripping away of all that is inessential – makes him a hero of faith.



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“It is with the smallest brushes that the artist paints the most exquisitely beautiful pictures.”

“Do not seek to have these trials lifted from you. Instead, ask for the grace to bear them well.”

“I have only my great devotion to St. Joseph to guide me.”

“God doesn't ask for the impossible, but wants everyone to offer their good intentions, their day's work, and some prayers. ... The best Way of the Cross is when people accept willingly the crosses that are sent to them.”

“I have asked God to keep me always in his presence.”

“People who suffer have something to offer to God. When they succeed in enduring their suffering, that is a daily miracle.”

**Brother Andre is remembered on January 6.**

# A prayer for simplicity of life and love

“Occupy my heart, O God, with your tremendous Life. Let my eyes see nothing in the world but your glory, and let my hands touch nothing that is not for your service. Let my tongue taste no bread that does not strengthen me to praise your great mercy. I will hear your voice and I will hear all harmonies you have created, singing your hymns. Sheep’s wool and cotton from the field shall warm me enough that I may live in your service; I will give the rest to your poor. Let me use all things for one sole reason: to find my joy in giving you glory.

Keep me ... from loving money in which is hatred, from avarice and ambition that suffocate my life. Keep me from the dead works of vanity and the thankless labor in which artists destroy themselves for pride and money and reputation, and saints are smothered under the avalanche of their own importunate zeal. Stanch in me the rank wound of covetousness and the hungers that exhaust my nature with their bleeding. Stamp out the serpent envy that stings love with poison and kills all joy. Untie my hands and deliver my heart from sloth. Set me free from the laziness that goes about disguised as activity when activity is not required of me, and from the cowardice that does what is not demanded, in order to escape sacrifice.

But give me the strength that waits upon you in silence and peace. Give me humility in which alone is rest, and deliver me from pride which is the heaviest of burdens. And possess my whole heart and soul with the simplicity of love. Occupy my whole life with the one thought and the one desire of love, that I may love not for the sake of merit, not for the sake of perfection, not for the sake of virtue, not for the sake of sanctity, but for you alone.”

Thomas Merton



“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”

Leonardo da Vinci

“If you cultivate a healthy poverty and simplicity, so that finding a penny will literally make your day, then, since the world is in fact planted in pennies, you have with your poverty bought a lifetime of days.”

Annie Dillard

“A vocabulary of truth and simplicity  
will be of service throughout your life.”

Winston Churchill

“None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what we should call voluntary poverty. Of a life of luxury the fruit is luxury, whether in agriculture, or commerce, or literature, or art. There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust.”

Henry David Thoreau

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## Questions for contemplation

1. How attached are you to the “things” in your life, be they possessions, attitudes, places or people? How do your attachments skew your priorities? How can you be freer?
2. Brother André suggests that we should bear suffering instead of asking that it be removed. What type of suffering is he talking about? When should suffering be borne, and when should you rise against it?
3. In today’s world, Brother André’s spirituality might be seen not as simple, but simplistic. What do you think? What can you learn from his approach, even if it doesn’t suit you? How would you describe your spirituality?

## More information

Brothers of Holy Cross: <http://holycrossbrothers.org>