

Memorial of St. Andre Bessette
Homily of Bishop John Barres
St. Agnes Cathedral
January 6, 2021

On December 8, 2020, the 150th Anniversary of Pope Blessed Pius IXth proclaiming St. Joseph the Universal Patron of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis announced a Year of St. Joseph and gave the Church a beautiful Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*.

I encourage you to read and pray Pope Francis' reflection on devotion to St. Joseph which is available on the Vatican Website and I encourage you to read and pray our own Pastoral Letter *Go to Joseph* which is available on the diocesan website: drvc.org.

Today, we celebrate an important moment in the Year of St. Joseph. We celebrate the Memorial of “the Miracle Worker of Montreal”, the Canadian Holy Cross Brother, St. Andre Bessette who helped build the Basilica of St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal Canada and who promoted an efficacious love for and devotion to St. Joseph in his practical deeds of daily charity as a door-keeper.¹

St. Andre lived from 1845 to 1937. He was beatified by Pope St. John Paul II in 1982 and canonized in 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI.

As a doorkeeper at a Holy Cross Catholic school in Montreal, Brother Andre opened the door to Jesus Christ every time he opened the door physically to that school and to the students, families and Cross-carriers he encountered.

The Sacred Scriptures are filled with references to doors and gates and in the Gospel of John, Jesus says: “I am the door.” (John 10:7)

We have a number of Doorkeeper Saints in the history of our Catholic Church. They include the Jesuit brother St. Alphonsus Rodriguez (1532-1617), the Dominican

¹ I am indebted in this homily to: 1)Notre Dame University Theology Professor Fr. Kevin Grove, CSC in his YouTube entitled “Saturdays with the Saints 2017: Venerable Solanus Casey (1870-1957) and St. Andre Bessette (1845-1937)”; and 2)Notre Dame University Theology Professor Lawrence Cunningham in his YouTube “The Humility of the Door Keeper: The Case of Brother Andre Bessette, CSC.” I strongly recommend these YouTubes which are deeply theological, biblical and inspirational.

brother St. Martin de Porres (1579-1639), and the simplex Capuchin priest Blessed Solanus Casey (1870-1957).

These doorkeeper saints who opened the door to Christ and greeted Christ as they listened to and served suffering humanity encourage us to reflect on the doors in our own lives.

Reflect for a moment on the door of the home you grew up in – and all the traffic that went in and out of it. Reflect on the door of where you live now. Reflect on your room door or your office door. Reflect in these Covid-19 times on the door or portal of the computer you use every day.

How do we answer the doors of life? As we open these doors, do we greet Christ with warmth, openness, steadfast charity, humility and magnanimity?

As we answer the doors of life, are we accompanied by St. Joseph and the Holy Family, as we greet Jesus Christ in every providential dimension of humanity that the Holy Spirit sends to us?

In every door-opening moment, St. Andre Bessette opened the door to Jesus Christ with the help, assistance and intercession of his friend St. Joseph.

He sought the intercession of St. Joseph, the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Guardian of the Holy Family, and a model for all husbands, fathers and family members.

St. Andre sought the intercession of St. Joseph, the Dreamer and Contemplative.

He sought the intercession of St. Joseph the Worker, who teaches us to give Glory to God in the sanctification of every detail of daily work.

St. Andre sought the intercession of St. Joseph, the Just Man – faith-filled, rock-solid, mature, reliable, constant, hardworking, contemplative and prayerful, always trusting in God as he faced the most difficult and perplexing situations and curve balls of life.

Today, as we remember and celebrate the stories and vast panorama of spiritual, physical and emotional healings that St. Andre Bessette and St. Joseph together were God's humble instruments of, we "go to Joseph" in the Year of St. Joseph.

We ask their intercession to help us to pray, to deepen our daily charity and to open every door we open in life to Jesus Christ.

As Pope Francis says in *Patris Corde*: “Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation.”