

TWO GREAT APOSTLES OF SAINT JOSEPH IN CANADA:



Holy Brother André and Good Father Frederick

"I was convinced that he was a saint," Brother André said of Good Father Frederick, adding: "From the beginning of the work of St. Joseph's Oratory, he encouraged me a lot. He came to the Oratory several times. Before his Mass, he generally encouraged me a lot. »

This statement by Brother André, delivered during the informative trial in the case for the beatification of Father Frederick, held in Trois-Rivières in 1927, clearly shows that Father Frederick's encouragement had been of great help to him in the difficulties of the founding of the Oratory.

Brother André, doorman of Notre Dame College, had just installed a statuette of Saint Joseph and the parents of the students venerated it on days of visitation. This influx must have hindered discipline: the Director tried to obstruct it. And Brother André resorted to Father Frederick who predicted the successive disappearance of obstacles and that one day this little place would become a great sanctuary dedicated to the worship of St. Joseph.

The beginnings were modest. In 1904, on Mount Royal, a small oratory dedicated to Saint Joseph opened. The event of November 19, 1904 was then considered a Day of exultation: in the chapel of the College of Our Lady, the blessing of a statue of St. Joseph, which is carried in procession to the new shrine, where Mass is celebrated and a way of the cross erected.

When Brother André in his statement affirms that Father Frederick "came to the Oratory several times" he speaks of this little oratory of 1904. Brother André served Mass and did so with his grave piety, following the priest's slightest gesture, visibly impressed by the mystery of the Eucharist.

United to Brother André through the most touching friendship, the Franciscan friar would recommend intentions to him, for he considered him a great friend of St. Joseph.

Father Frederick's biographer, Father Romain Légaré, O.F.M. tells this amusing story: "One day, between these two holy souls, there was a struggle of humility worthy of a painter of Fioretti. Father Frederick arrives at St. Joseph's Oratory. "I come to ask Brother André how he manages to be so holy.

The rector takes him to the small chapel and climbs the stairs that lead to the attic where the brother lives. He comes down and the visitor, as he approaches, throws himself on his knees and exclaims, "Bless me, Brother André - Oh, no, it is up to you to bless me, since you are a priest.

And there they are both on their knees, one in front of the other, in a noble assault of humility. What a charming version of the meeting of St Dominic and St Francis of Assisi! At the end, the two religious, still kneeling, give each other the embrace of peace."

A regular visitor at the Oratory, Father Frederic climbed the Mount Royal at least eleven times between 1911 and 1916, accompanied by his pilgrims from Trois-Rivières, lay persons or Franciscan novices. Brother André was one of the last visitors Father Frederic received in August 1916, a few days before his death. The latter had gone to give him a medal of St. Joseph in order to heal him. Father Frederick then had answered him to let the Good Lord to do what he wants.

A beautiful painting by Peter Franz presented here reminds us of the deep friendship between these two great apostles of Saint Joseph in Canada: Holy Brother André and Good Father Frederick.

In this month of St. Joseph and in this year 2021 dedicated to St. Joseph by Pope Francis, may the prayer composed by the Pope for this occasion rise to heaven:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.

Georges Morin, o.f.m.