



Theme of the Pastoral Year 2010-2011 *Called to Holiness—the Saints among Us*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On October 17, the Holy Cross religious Brother André (Alfred Bessette) will be proclaimed a saint by Pope Benedict XVI, the first native-born Canadian male to reach sainthood.

Brother André will be “our saint,” as many Canadians have heard of healings through his approach to God through St. Joseph or been helped by bringing petitions to him. Such healings were not only physical, however, for many received comfort from the simple words of encouragement of this humble servant of the Lord.

My grandmother, a widow with ten children, spoke of the consolation her meeting with Brother André had given her. I have heard others speak of the impact of Brother André in the lives of those dear to them.

With others from our Archdiocese, I will attend the canonization ceremony in Rome and the Mass of Thanksgiving at Montreal’s Olympic Stadium on October 30. We will hold our own evening Mass of Thanksgiving in Notre Dame Cathedral Basilica on the Feast Day of Brother André, January 6, 2011. Plan now to attend.

Four hundred years ago next month, on October 3, 1610, St. Gabriel Lalemant was born. Eighty years ago, on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in June 1930, he was among the eight saints canonized as the Canadian Martyrs. They were “our saints” too, having played a key role in the evangelization of the Native Peoples.

Thinking about these “saints among us” leads me to share with you a few thoughts on the call to holiness, the theme for our 2010-2011 Pastoral Year. Since the call to be holy calls us to be saints, they offer important clues on how to give ourselves over to God’s will in our lives.

In the 21st century we may hear more about celebrities such as movie stars, athletes and even some religious leaders. Veneration of the saints is something different. We recognize in them something unique and extraordinary, a dimension different from worldly heroes and idols.

God makes us feel His presence in the saints; in them He speaks to us and shows us how to continue the mission of His Son. And the Church's devotion to the saints reminds us to follow their example, to follow their whole-hearted response to the grace of their calling.

The Second Vatican Council explained that the Church recognizes people as saints because they have been perfectly transformed into the image of Christ.

The transparent holiness of the saints is hard to define but easy to recognize. When we look at them, we catch a glimpse of God. We sense the same qualities, attitudes and behaviour that God first made manifest in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man.

People of faith admire saints for reminding them of God's promises and presence. Those without faith, or with a seldom-used faith, sometimes feel uneasy when the saints remind them how they ought to be living their lives.

An important aspect of our call to be holy is facing our own weaknesses and sins and, following a long church tradition, making reparation for them and for those of other members of the Church.

Because I have been asked by the Holy See to lead an apostolic visitation to the Archdiocese of Tuam as part of the Church in Ireland's healing from the terrible scandal of clerical abuse, I am going to devote the First Friday of each month from October 2010 to June 2011 as a special day of prayer and fasting. I invite you all to join me in this penitential exercise, in whatever form of prayer and penance you choose.

I will be praying not only for the Church in Ireland but at home as well, praying for healing in solidarity with all victims of abuse, and asking God to give perpetrators of abuse the grace to repent and to accept the course of justice along with His mercy.

Let us support one another in prayer that each of us may heed God's call to answer—each in his or her unique way—the universal call to holiness.

God bless you all.



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Archbishop of Ottawa

September 26, 2010
Feast Day of the Canadian Martyrs