

# Canadian piety includes a strong feminine character

Timed to coincide with the canonization of St. Brother Andre, Canada's Catholic bishops have released a study of popular piety in Canada.

The study shows the importance of the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Anne, as well as popular piety's "distinctive Canadian character and roots."

"It would not be an exaggeration to say that the popular piety of the faithful in Canada has a distinctive feminine quality," says the document entitled Popular Piety in Canada: reflections on some popular expressions of the faith.

"The maternity and maternal qualities of both Our Lady and St. Anne strike a chord in the hearts of Canadians, particularly among indigenous peoples," it says. "This should come as no surprise, given the pioneering role of so many heroic women in the founding years of Canada as a young nation."

"The best criterion for evaluating the worth and the spiritual fruitfulness of a particular devotion is its capacity to draw people deeper into the liturgical life and ministry of the Church," Vancouver Archbishop Michael Miller, chair of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' (CCCB)'s Commission for Doctrine, said.



Pilgrims journey to Lac Ste. Anne every year to honour St. Anne. Western Catholic Reporter file photo

"Understanding popular expressions of faith and devotion in Canada not only enables the bishops to better understand the spiritual needs and gifts of the faithful, but also indicates how faith is brought into the everyday lives of Catholics," he said.

Canada's five national shrines attract 2.5 million pilgrims a year. They

include the Canadian Martyrs' Shrine, the Saint Anne de Beaupré Basilica, the Shrine of Notre-Dame-du-Cap, the Saint-Antoine Hermitage and Saint Joseph's Oratory.

The document offers some theological points for reflection and guidelines on finding a balance between popular piety and the Church's liturgical life.

The guidelines include references to the Blessed Trinity; the person and action of the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of Christ; and the "ecclesial principle" that the faithful are the holy People of God.

"Devotion to the Passion of Christ should also lead the faithful to a full and conscious participation in the Eucharist," the booklet says.

It concludes popular piety is an expression of "the deep inner rootedness of faith."