

Scarf-waving crowd honours St. Br. André



Enthusiastic crowd members wave their scarves during Cardinal Turcotte's homily. Carolyn Girard, Catholic Register

When Catholics worldwide gave thanks for All Saints Nov. 1, there was a new Canadian saint among the list of holy men and women.

An enthusiastic crowd of more than 48,000 from across Canada and the United States came to the Olympic Stadium Oct. 30 to celebrate the recent canonization of St. Brother André.

"This is not a small saint that has been canonized, but a great saint, a very great saint," said Montreal's Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte in his homily. "This very great saint – Brother André – is homegrown."

St. Brother André, who founded St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal and who lived from 1845 to 1937, was canonized by Pope Benedict in Rome, Oct. 17.

The predominantly French-language celebration began with the ringing of the bell of the original chapel that Brother André had built in honour of St. Joseph more than a century ago.

Popular Quebec singer Chantal Pary sang *Miracle de la Montagne* (Miracle on the Mountain), which she had written about Br. André for his beatification in 1982. The crowd applauded and cheered as she belted out the familiar refrain.



Bishops wait for the start of Mass to celebrate St. André Bessette at Olympic Stadium Shaun Best, Reuters

The procession included 58 Canadian bishops, more than 100 priests, as well as nearly 200 young people.

It concluded with the presentation of a new reliquary, containing fragments of Brother André's heart, which were carried by several Holy Cross brothers and accompanied by members of the extended Bessette family.

In his homily, Turcotte offered a straightforward, poignant message. The assembly responded by applauding exuberantly and waving their white scarves – eight times – in agreement and appreciation at different points during his address.

“The Church never canonizes someone solely for what they were or lived before, but for what they have to say and to demonstrate to women and men today,” Turcotte said.

SERVICE TO OTHERS

“First of all, (Brother André) tells us and demonstrates to us that a life is beautiful and fruitful when it is put to the service of others.”

“Pray for us,” he petitioned St. Brother André on behalf of the assembly at the end of the homily.

“Pray that we may become women and men of compassion, attentive to the needs of others, women and men who love God with a great love because they know they are very loved by him.”

In addition to the bread and the wine, the offertory procession included one of Brother André's little black suitcases, which he would take on his many trips to raise funds to build St. Joseph's Oratory; St. Joseph's oil, which Brother André used to bring hope, comfort and healing to the sick and the infirm; and crutches, representing all those who were healed at the oratory through the intercession of St. Joseph.

Among the dignitaries present at the Mass were Prime Minister Stephen Harper

and Quebec Premier Jean Charest.

Previously published in the Western Catholic Reporter