

Faithful to His encounter

The ORATORY magazine presents brief reflections to accompany you day by day during the Novena which will take place at Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal from March 10 to 18, in preparation to the solemn feast of Saint Joseph on March 19.

Three members of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the religious family of Saint Brother André, will take turns to preach daily at the Oratory: Brother Thomas A. Dziekan, Sister Kesta Occident and Father Claude Grou. We thank them for their contribution to this special edition.



Faithful to an encounter with our brothers and sisters, and with Christ

Today, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the great feast of Saint Joseph, on March 19, we acknowledge that we are invited to encounter our loving God.

Pope Francis always speaks in terms of our encounter with the other, with our brother or sister, with our neighbour, with those who love us and those who do not love us. Our encounter with the other is really an encounter with Christ. When we deliberately seek to encounter the other, we do so with Christ.

These nine days of prayer invite us to reflect on our own encounter with God; to examine our stance toward our brothers and sisters; and most of all, to open our arms ready to embrace them all with love as did Jesus.

This Novena provides us with the opportunity to approach our two patrons here on the top of Mount Royal, Saint Joseph and Saint Brother André. We are reminded that Joseph speaks not a word in the gospels, but acts to protect, to save and to nurture the child Jesus and his mother Mary. Joseph the just is the model of one who teaches and is a model of strength, of love and faithfulness. Joseph was strong in his faithfulness. He was faithful in his strength.

Saint Brother André, the disciple and best friend of Saint Joseph, reminds us of faithfulness to prayer and love. He reminds us that we must be in a relationship with Saint Joseph and most of all with our loving God. Yes God loves us immensely, but we must learn to appreciate that immense love, to allow ourselves to be loved by this God, and to love Him immensely as well.

Saint Joseph who cares for us and protects us, help us to see your faithfulness to our loving God who wants to spoil us with his abundant and provident love. Pray that we may be witnesses of that great love. May we serve others, protect, welcome and shelter them as you did. Saint Joseph, we place ourselves in your care.



Brother Thomas A. Dziekan, CSC

Since 2018, Brother Thomas Dziekan has held the position of Provincial Superior of the Holy Cross Brothers of the Moreau Province, headquartered in Texas. Having grown up in the United States, Brother Dziekan has focused his ministry mainly in the educational institutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross: in Albany (NY), Waterbury (CT), and West Haven (CT), where he had been a student himself. Elected Vicar General and First Assistant of the Congregation's Superior General in 2010, he was responsible for securing the patrimony of the Holy Cross in France, and for establishing the Shrine of Blessed Basile Moreau, founder of the Congregation, in Le Mans.

DAY 2 – MARCH 11

Faithful to serve as Jesus did

This is the second day of our Novena. We have much to learn about what it means to encounter the other and about what it means to be faithful. In great bursts of exuberance, we think that this is easy. We seek to be good and to do good but...

Let us look at the encounter that Matthew describes in the gospel. A good mother, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, brings them to Jesus just as he is about to go up to Jerusalem. She wants the best for her sons and she is willing to go to the head of the line to ask Jesus directly to ensure them a place of choice by his side. The greatness she wants and imagines does not exist. "Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant," said Jesus, "just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26.28)

This encounter demand that we be small, hidden. No trumpets or parades for us! No huge banquets. No speeches, no applause. Saint Joseph himself lived his life in the back-

ground. His only task was to love Jesus and Mary, and to love them in such a way that it was all encompassing. It was not for his glory. It was because he loved them.

Look at Saint Brother André. He was known, but he acted only for the good of others, teaching others that they must pray fervently, tirelessly and with faith. He was not one to put himself first. And besides, Brother André was with the poor, the sick, those on the margin, those left aside. As Jesus said, when we go to encounter the other, we do not go alone. We go with Jesus. We accompany Him and we bring Him to those who need Him.

Joseph, head of the Holy Family, first teacher of Jesus, good provider, you who encountered our loving God and who intercedes for us, we ask you: Show us the way, bring us with you so that we may bring others to Jesus.

DAY 3 – MARCH 12

Faithful to give witness to our faith

Today, the gospel reading invites us to trust in the Lord. Luke introduces us to Lazarus and the rich man. What an encounter! It is a continued invitation to welcome our brothers and sisters; to adopt the stance of Jesus and to look at them with love, compassion and generosity of heart.

This third day of the Novena is an opportunity for an encounter: to see with the eyes of Jesus the people and families who are suffering around us; to be sensitive to their struggles; to respond in some positive way. Yes, Jesus is calling us to encounter Him through these men and women who are living difficult social situations, who are looking for respite or who have given up any hope of a respite and angrily push others away.

These encounters touch us and change us. They make us aware of the presence of God within us and within the other. There is a richness and grace in the encounter to be discovered and shared. We are called to give witness to this. How? "The only way for us to give witness is to live where we are, and be what we are in the midst of the banal, everyday realities," explained blessed Christian de

Chergé, Cistercian monk of Tibhirine (1937-1996). Our faithfulness to our encounter with the living Jesus is part of our witness.

Saint Joseph, by his attentiveness and listening, brought the grace of his faith to his encounter with others. He was in a privileged place as he cared for both Jesus and Mary, as husband, father, teacher, protector, guide, and provider. Joseph lived the encounter in a way very few of us will ever understand. His friend, Saint Brother André, lived it in the same way.

May we aspire to that depth of faithfulness and understanding. May we seek to fashion a world where love and truth, peace and mercy prevail.

May Saint Joseph and Saint Brother André pray for us in our need. May we be inspired to a faithfulness to proclaim the love of God for us all.

Faithful to the One who invites us to carefully tend His vine

“To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live there; it is he who laid its foundations on the seas, on the flowing waters fixed it firm.” (Psalm 24:1-2) However, God has entrusted His creation to humanity, asking us to take care of this planet and everything on it. Each person has a unique calling that converges toward a common goal for all of humanity to thrive and prosper in life “so that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

To Saint Joseph, God entrusted Mary, the person chosen to bring Jesus into the world – He who is the very Life of our world. Once he consented, Joseph did not shrink from any sacrifice. He faithfully tended God’s vine. He nurtured God’s gift and brought it to maturity to be the wine of salvation for all people throughout the ages.

During this Novena, we come to pray for this world that is suffering and groaning in its labour pains (Romans 8:22). We come to pray for those dear to us and for ourselves, often lacking in direction, ill and in search of a better life. Despite our destitution, God is asking us today to make this life better for our loved ones and for this planet that we live on so that it may continue to be habitable for us and for the generations to come. Let us not be neglectful or even murderous tenders of the vine (Matthew 21:33-46) who sow destruction. As He did with Joseph and His friend, Brother André, God is inviting us to faithfully tend His vine so that its fine wine may bring joy to the heart of our world.

Saint Joseph, faithful servant of God, you tended to Mary, who brought to this world Jesus, Her Son. Help us, despite our impoverishment, to look after our distressed planet, our families and our peoples torn apart by war and migration. Teach us to bring new Life to our world.



Sister Kesta Occident, CSC

Born in Cap-Haïtien, Sister Kesta returned to sunny Haiti in 2018 after spending 13 years in Canada as Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Holy Cross. She had previously been Regional Leader of the Sisters of Holy Cross as well as president of the Haitian Conference of Religious (CHR). A trained agronomist, she has been working for the past two years with the team at the Institut de Technologie et d’Animation (ITECA), a Haitian NGO engaged with rural organizations supporting farmers, women and youth through programs designed to bring about systemic changes.

DAY 5 – MARCH 14

Faithful to the One who teaches us to love without measure

Our God is a God without measure. His justice is mercy and it defies our human logic based on the most worthy.

“All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends ... But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his loose women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.” (Luke 15:29-30) The heart of the father in this parable is an inexhaustible source of love for each of his sons, where they can quench their thirst, at any time, regardless of worthiness. For him, as with Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard: *“The measure of love is to love without measure.”* God asks us to believe in the abundance of His spring offering the water of Life and to return and draw from it without fear.

Saint Joseph’s faith in this boundless love was so great that he married Mary and became a father to Jesus, without yielding to the human laws that would have justified his abandoning this young woman who was carrying a child that was not his. He also learned to love without meas-

ure, to give up his reputation and his security in order to accompany God’s gift to the world, Jesus, who had come to transform our wandering and our desperation into abundant Life.

If Brother André continually points us toward Saint Joseph, it is because he knows that Saint Joseph can show us the path of merciful justice, which is much different from punitive justice. To give and forgive from a “heart that understands suffering” and not on the basis of worthiness ... That is how God accepts us and that is how we are called to accept and treat others.

Saint Joseph, you accepted Mary and Jesus, the Son she was carrying, to participate in God’s merciful plan for humanity’s salvation. Pray that God grant us this generosity of spirit and love without measure that accepts and accompanies the wounded along the path of His blessings.

DAY 6 – MARCH 15

Faithful to the One who calls us to the encounter ... far beyond our borders

“You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?” (John 4:9) To reach out to the Samaritan woman, Jesus put himself into a situation in which he shared the same need with her. He also consented to be the one who was most disadvantaged, as he had no means to draw water from the well to quench his thirst. To encounter in the scorching heat a woman, a Samaritan, beyond the prejudices that opposed Jews and Samaritans, men and women of the time. To quench her thirst forever.

Likewise Joseph and Mary ... Forced to take shelter in a stable, with no one to help them but simple folk, shepherds who brought them warmth and music, accompanied by their animals and the angels’ voices, and receiving in return God Himself in the form of a Child.

And Brother André ... Frail in health, he reached out to the sick and the suffering, with the very compassion of God. A genuine encounter, beyond all boundaries, that called for no particular affiliation other than a deep trust in this quest for healing in order to continue serving.

Saint Joseph’s Oratory, where this year we are celebrating this Novena for the one hundredth time, is a shrine where we gather in prayer from different countries and cultures in the hope of encountering the One who can heal us, and heal our families, our countries and our planet. Year after year, the Congregation of Holy Cross, Brother André’s religious family, faithfully assumes this heritage of compassion so that bodies and hearts thirsty for healing may continue to be blessed and, in turn, become a blessing to our world.

Saint Joseph, you inspired Brother André to open his heart to all those in distress. Through your intercession, may God bless the Family of Holy Cross, the faithful heir of this same mission at the Oratory, and may people from all countries and origins who come here continue to find comfort for continuing their mission of compassion.

Faithful to His mission, even when the world rejects us

Today's Gospel passage speaks about Jesus returning to his place of origin. He certainly could have hoped for more sympathy and understanding, but, on the contrary, he was rejected. They "hustled him out of the town" and were "intending to throw him off the cliff." (Luke 4:29) In the face of this hostility, the reaction of Jesus was quite surprising: "But he passed straight through the crowd and walked away." (v. 30) Jesus is fundamentally free, unreachable. These threats—even death itself—do not get to him, do not disturb him. He is unafraid.

We see signs of rejection even in the stories relating the birth of Jesus. Luke the Evangelist tells us that Mary "gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the living-space." (Luke 2:7) When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the temple, Simeon told Mary that the child would be "a sign that is opposed." (Luke 2:34) Matthew the Evangelist adds that some time later Joseph fled with Mary and the child to escape persecution. Joseph knew, therefore, what it meant to be rejected. But remembering God's words that the angel had spoken to him: "Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife" (Matthew 1:20), Joseph remained faithful to her for the rest of his life.

Saint Brother André also remained faithful to his mission of care, even when he faced criticism and a lack of understanding. It can be said of him too that he was free and unreachable. In the face of criticism, he "walked away" and acted in accordance with his convictions and with God's will. Today, as before, Christians remain true to the Lord and to their faith, and in the midst of the world they bear witness to their inner freedom that no one can take from them.

*Lord, you ask us to follow in your footsteps.
Give us the strength to remain faithful in serving you
and in proclaiming your message of love and
compassion, even in difficult times.*



Father Claude Grou, CSC

Well known by the pilgrims who visit the shrine, Father Grou has been the Rector of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal for more than 14 years. Originally from Ville Saint-Laurent, he joined the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1961. Over the years he has taught in India, helped train young people in religious life, and assisted the Superior of the Canadian Province. Later, from 1986 to 1998, he was Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Following that period, considerable challenges awaited him at the Oratory, where he has successfully led important projects, including the shrine's centennial celebrations, the canonization of Brother André and the ongoing major development project.

DAY 8 – MARCH 17

Faithful to the One who invites us to forgive

In his Gospel, Matthew gathers the utterances of Jesus that can guide believers in their efforts to build a community based on His words. “Then Peter went up to him and said, ‘Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me?’” (Matthew 18:21) In the parable that follows this question, Jesus invites those listening to understand that they themselves have received the Lord’s forgiveness and that they must also learn to forgive. This call to forgiveness is so important that it is at the heart of the quintessential prayer Jesus gave to His disciples: “Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.”

The Bible does not make direct reference to forgiveness in the few passages where Joseph is mentioned, but we can guess that in Bethlehem he may well have had considerable bitterness in his heart. After all, the people could have made an effort to create a small space for Mary to give birth to her son under suitable conditions. And then there was Herod, who wanted this harmless child to be killed for no reason ... Confronted with such closed hearts, Joseph kept his own heart open to God’s presence. It was better to forget these humiliations and pursue his path.

Brother André had been humiliated by Dr. Charette, who viewed him as nothing but a faith healer and a charlatan. But Brother André continued his mission without saying a word. One day the doctor, desperate because of his ailing wife and with nowhere else to turn, sought out Brother André, who responded to his request by interceding for his wife’s healing. Forgiveness sometimes means being able to turn the page following an affront and looking out for the other person’s well-being.

It is difficult to forgive; the road to forgiveness can be long and painful, but God’s call is clear. To be a child of this God who forgives, we must establish forgiveness at the very core of our lives.

Saint Joseph, you who were able to hold steadfastly to your mission and protect Mary and the child, even in the face of the darkest threats, teach us how to be faithful to the Lord’s call and to forgive those who seek to hinder us.

DAY 9 – MARCH 18

Faithful to be just, in fact like Saint Joseph

In the Gospel for this 9th day of the Novena, Jesus says: “... if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees ...” (Matthew 5:20) And regarding Joseph, the Evangelist wrote: “Joseph, being an upright man.” (Matthew 1:19) What does this mean? Having learned that Mary, his betrothed, was pregnant, his first thought was to be faithful to the law. However, the angel’s words led him to see beyond legal justice in order to take up his new mission. “When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do.” (Matthew 1:24)

Joseph had understood that true justice meant listening to the Lord and aligning his life to God’s will, in search of perfect harmony. This justice is unbelievably more demanding as it requires our constant attention to God’s will. Taking Mary with him and agreeing to be the child’s father were decisions that would transform his life.

Like his role model Saint Joseph, Brother André also aligned his life to what the Lord asked of him. While remain-

ing faithful to his duty to his superiors, Brother André also responded to God’s will by caring for the thousands of people who knocked at his door. He had understood that God was asking him to always go further, through charity and compassion, in reaching out to others. He was able to align himself to the Lord’s calling.

Just like Saint Joseph and Saint Brother André, we are all called, day after day, to align our life. “Your will be done,” as we say daily when we pray the Our Father, echoing the words of Jesus.

Lord, we desire to be more attentive to your calling each day. Guide our steps so that, like Saint Joseph and Saint Brother André, we may discover your will and be faithful to it.

Faithful to His encounter

Lord,

*You open your arms
to welcome us out of your love;
you beckon us to come toward you.*

*As Saint Joseph responded faithfully
to the angel's invitation
by staying on the path
that you traced out for him,
so we wish to keep our heart
attentive to your bidding.*

*Saint Brother André
daily moved forward
toward an encounter with you,
as he ministered to the men and women
who came toward him;
so we want to recognize you
in the encounter with the other.*

*Just as thousands of pilgrims
have for a hundred years,
we come today praying to you
with a confident faith.*

*Help us to fashion a world
where love and truth,
peace and mercy
prevail.*

*We ask this of you our Father,
through your Son and in the Spirit.*

Amen.

Novena to Saint Joseph March 10 to 18

Faithful to His Encounter

Daily preaching during the Mass,
(in French) at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Bilingual Masses

March 10, 12 and 17 at 7:30 p.m.

English Masses

March 15 at 11:15 a.m.

Feast of Saint Joseph March 19

SOLEMN MASSES IN THE BASILICA

10 a.m. Most Rev. André Richard, CSC
(bilingual) Archbishop Emeritus of Moncton

2:30 p.m. Most Rev. Louis Corriveau
Bishop of Joliette

7:30 p.m. Most Rev. Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montréal

MASSES IN THE CRYPT CHURCH

In English 12:30 p.m. – Most Rev.
James H. MacDonald, CSC,
and 8 p.m.

In French 7 a.m., 8 a.m., 9 a.m.,
11:30 a.m., 4:30 p.m.

In Spanish 3 p.m.

Illustrations:

Pages 9, 10, 12, 14 and 16: Details of the bronze artworks
on the confessionals' doors of the Basilica, Saint Joseph's
Oratory of Mount Royal [Robert Prévost].

Photos: Nathalie Dumas

Page 9: Statue of Saint Joseph [Joseph Guardo] and oak
wood Calvary [Henri Charlier] in the sanctuary of the Basilica.

Photo: Samuel Martin