



May 23 Pontiff to Declare Blessed Two Members of Local Orders

Father Peter Donders, CSSR

A few years back, Father Patrick Healy, CSSR, then a missionary to Brazil, stopped off at an unpretentious stone chapel in the midst of jungle in Surinam. There the pastor of Our Lady of Victory Church celebrated Mass.

Nearly a century earlier, the chapel marked the resting place of an unusual man, a priest and missionary, a man who, once rejected by the Redemptorist Congregation, in later life became a Redemptorist almost by default, and a holy man who May 23 will be declared among the blessed by Pope John Paul II.

The man was Father Peter Donders, and today a source of pride to the Redemptorist fraternity which staffs both

Our Lady of Victory Church and Notre Dame Retreat House in this diocese.

He was born in 1809, in Tilburg in the Netherlands, a town at the center of the Dutch wool trade. His father, in fact, was a home weaver for that trade.

Father Donders later wrote that while living there, "It pleased God to fill my heart with a desire for the priesthood so that I could work for the salvation of souls. At that time I was about five years old."

His mother died when he was seven, about the time he began school. He was noted by a teacher as being frail and thin, slow at regular school work, but extremely bright at spiritual studies.

He entered the seminary in 1831, nearly a decade older than the other boys with whom he was studying; and he worked as a servant to pay for his studies.

He was 26 when he was ready for the major seminary, and, because of the custom of the day, money problems were a major obstacle to any question of his ordination. First he had to pay for his education, but he could no longer work as a servant; second, he had to pay fee for his "ordination title."

The seminary president suggested he look to join a religious order which would provide for his education and his support in the ministry.

So Donders set off for the Jesuits, who said no. He then



FATHER DONDERS

tried the Redemptorists, who also said no. Finally he approached the Franciscans, again no.

He returned to the major seminary, where the president worked out a plan to use money from a gift to the institution for Donders' education.

In 1839, a prelate from Surinam visited the seminary, described the situation in the Dutch colony, and fired Donders' desire to work there. He signed up on the spot, was ordained in 1841, and in 1842 left for Surinam, never to return to his homeland.

He worked in that country for 44 years, serving diverse groups of people, indigents, white colonists, black slaves, and slaves who had escaped their shackles and settled inland.

On the question of the slaves, Father Donders once wrote: "Woe to Surinam on the great day of judgment. Woe to those who enrich themselves with the sweat and blood of these poor slaves who have no defender but God."

Initially the priest served at a parish in Paramaribo, the capital, carrying out all the normal duties one associates with a parish priest. At this time he began to be recognized as "the holy priest" by those he served.

In 1855, however, he was to begin work with Surinam's lepers, a work which was to establish him in the eyes of his contemporaries as a saint, a work which lasted the remainder of his priestly life, nearly 30 years.

In the 1860s, the Vatican decided to entrust all missionary work in Surinam to the Redemptorists. At that move, the non-order clergy packed up and moved back to the Netherlands — except for Father Donders, who asked admission to the Redemptorists, so that he could continue his labors among the lepers.

So, at the age of 58, he was able to write of the congregation which had once spurned him, "Every day, I realize more and more what a blessing it is to have been called to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer."

In the 1880s he was recalled by his order to serve as a parish priest; the assignment was to last only a year. As he left the leper colony he told his people, "I will return to you and I will die with you."

The prophecy was fulfilled: he died at the age of 77 in the midst of the colony, Jan. 14, 1887, at 3 p.m.

Brother Andre Bessette, CSC

Brother Andre, CSC, was denied a religious profession but was allowed to remain a novice. He served as porter at Notre Dame College in Montreal. He had an unswerving devotion to St. Joseph which produced not only a famous pilgrimage site in Canada but a candidate for sainthood. Brother Andre will be beatified in Rome by Pope John Paul II on Sunday, May 23.

Born Alfred Bessette on Aug. 9, 1845, in the small Canadian village of St. Gregoire d'Iberville, Brother Andre was the eighth of twelve children and was orphaned at age 12. He worked as a shoemaker, baker, blacksmith and tinsmith but because of ill health was unsuccessful in the enterprises. He immigrated to the U.S. where he found work in the Connecticut textile mills. Like many of his French-Canadian countrymen, however, he returned to his homeland when the Canadian Confederacy became fact. He settled in St. Cesaire where he became a novice in the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1870.



BROTHER ANDRE

the same year Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph the patron of the universal Church.

In 1872, the provincial council of the Holy Cross fraternity decided not to admit Brother Andre to religious profession because of his delicate health. He was permitted, however, to remain a novice and became porter of Notre Dame College. And that's when the road to beatification began.

His position as porter

placed him in close contact with students. He became their friend and would visit those who were sick and pray to St. Joseph to protect them. There were instant cures which didn't go unnoticed by the community. Soon, parents, friends, and citizens were asking him to pray to St. Joseph for them, and more cures were documented. Visitors became so numerous that the parlor of the college was no longer adequate for the "Miracle Man from Montreal" to greet the poor, sick and the lame.

With permission from Montreal Church authorities, Brother Andre erected a small wooden chapel (the beginning of St. Joseph's Oratory) on Mt. Royal for the people to continue their devotions to St. Joseph.

"It was there that the wonders of the oratory started," wrote Father Aime Trotter, CSC, "and they have not stopped since."

The chapel was blessed on Oct. 10, 1904, and although it only measured 15 by 18 feet, the crowds kept coming and plans went ahead to enlarge it. The flow of pilgrims increased so much that in 1913 it was decided to build a large church on the spot. Construction of the crypt was completed in 1917 and the first stone of the Basilica was laid on Aug. 31, 1924. The Depression halted further progress and Brother Andre did not live to see its completion. He died on Jan. 6, 1937, at the age of 91. The Basilica was completed in 1966.

In the week after his death, a million people visited Brother Andre's bier to pay their homage. And more cures were recorded. On June 12, 1978, Pope Paul VI declared Brother Andre venerable and his case for sainthood was furthered one more step. After the beatification, the next and final step will be canonization, which, according to Holy Cross sources, will be based upon cures following the beatification. Once canonized, Brother Andre

will be the first saint of the Holy Cross Congregation.

The congregation which Brother Andre dedicatedly served is a religious community of priests and brothers founded by Basil Anthony Moreau, a priest of the Diocese of LeMans, France, in the mid-19th century. The group has been in the Diocese of Rochester since 1962 when the brothers began Cardinal Mooney High School, 800 Maiden Lane, in association with the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester.

Celebrations in honor of Brother Andre's beatification will take place on Sunday, June 20, in the Olympic Stadium, Montreal, Canada.



Mott Award Winner

Sister Marie Michelle Peartree, administrator of St. Ann's Home/The Heritage, has been awarded the Edward Mott Moore Award from the Monroe County Medical Society. The award, established in honor of Dr. Moore, a widely-known physician, for his service to the community and the medical profession, is given annually to health professionals.

Selected Pools/Jay J. Walsh
 "Serving the Rochester area for 30 years"
HEATING • COOLING • OIL • GAS
 Pool Oil • WATER HEATING • Ductwork
 Call 434-6256

Back by popular demand!

The Giant Print Bible

Meets the needs of the eyes as well as of the spirit! Large type (14-point, see sample) on high opacity paper ensures high readability and increased clarity — perfect for older readers, beginning readers, or anyone with special visual needs.

Easy to carry and to hold, the **Giant Print Bible** contains the text approved by Pope Paul VI (New American Bible translation), as used in the readings in the Mass. Its 2,176 pages include a presentation page and notes at the end of each book. Tastefully bound in gold-stamped, black leatherflex, the **Giant Print Bible** maintains the beauty and inspiration sought after in a personal-use Bible. No. 886, leatherflex, \$18.95

NOTE: Shipment to begin April 1, 1982 — reserve your copy now! The low, pre-publication price of \$18.95 is effective on all orders received by March 31, 1982. Thereafter, price is subject to increase.

COURIER-JOURNAL

SPECIAL OFFER

Courier-Journal Dept. NH
 114 South Union Street
 Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Please reserve the following quantity of **Giant Print Bibles** for me at the special, pre-publication price of only \$18.95 each:

— Copy(ies), No. 886, Giant Print Bible, @ \$18.95

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State/Zip _____

Payment must accompany order.

SPECIAL OFFER

...to Herod, who was extremely angry...