

Mass to commemorate Detroit meeting of 2 holy men

DETROIT — A special Mass is planned to commemorate the 1935 visit between the soon-to-be-canonicalized Blessed André Bessette of Montreal and Detroit's Venerable Solanus Casey.

The Capuchin friars and the Community of the Holy Cross will join in hosting the event, set for Sunday, Oct. 31, 5 p.m. in the chapel of St. Bonaventure Monastery, 1780 Mount Elliott Ave., Detroit.

The visit of Bl. André to the Detroit monastery was recorded by the provincial secretary, and it is noted that at the end of the visit, Bl. André knelt to ask for the blessing of Fr. Solanus.

After blessing him, Ven. Solanus himself knelt down and asked the holy brother to bless him as well.

The two humble and holy por-

Who was Blessed André Bessette?

Blessed André Bessette, still popularly known as Bro. André, was born Alfred Bessette in 1845 near Montreal, Quebec, to a poor, working-class family.

Both his parents died by the time he was 12. This and his own struggles with illness strengthened his faith and compassion. After briefly working in textile mills, Alfred pursued his calling as a Holy Cross brother. He entered the order in 1870 and was given the religious name Bro. André. His first assignment, which was to last him 40 years, was as doorman of the community's school in Montreal. Bro. André developed a deep devotion to St. Joseph and directed people to him for his intercession. Thousands claimed to have been cured through Bro. André's healing touch, and he became known as the "Miracle Man of Montreal." He died in 1937 and Pope John Paul II beatified him in 1982. He will be canonized Oct. 17 at the Vatican.

ters, each known in their lives for their sanctity, had met on the occasion of a visit by Bro. André with his family in Windsor. Bro. André expressed an interest to his family to meet Fr. Solanus after hearing of his holiness.

Their meeting took place in the monastery's front offices. The two holy men had much in common. Both did manual labor before joining their religious orders. Both of their orders' superiors had doubts on the

success of their vocations (Bro. André had uncertain health; Fr. Solanus had trouble academically); both spent their days receiving visitors and were known as healers by those who sought their counsel.

Archbishop Allen Vigneron will preside at the Mass, which is also the eve of the feast of All Saints, one week after Bl. André's Oct. 17 canonization, when he will have been raised to the Altar of the Saints in Rome by Pope Benedict XVI.

Prior to Mass, a 3 p.m. panel discussion and book signing will take place with Joel Schorn, author of "God's Doorkeepers."

Following Mass, a blessing and dedication of artwork commemorating the encounter will take place, followed by a reception.

— *The Michigan Catholic*