

Blessed André Grasset (1758–1792)

André Grasset was born in Montreal on April 3, 1758. His father was French, from Montpellier, and had arrived in Canada in 1749, when appointed secretary of the new governor general of New France. After the death of his first wife, he married the daughter of a rich merchant, with whom he had five children. André was the second. They lived close to the Chapel of Bon Secours.

After the Treaty of Paris, on February 10, 1763, Mr Grasset decides to sell his property and to return to France. André is six years old.

He is sent, together with his brothers, to the Collège Sainte-Barbe in Paris where he finishes his classical studies, before going on to preparing for priesthood. His bishop recognizes his qualities and piety and appoints him as canon of the Cathedral. Two years later, in 1783, he is ordained priest.

When the French Revolution begins, in 1789, André is 31 years old. In 1790 the National Constituent Assembly suppresses the Cathedral Chapters and, in 1791, obliges all members of clergy to sign the “Constitution civile du clergé”. André finds refuge with the Eudist Fathers in Tourettes, Paris. Here, in 1792, he is captured and made prisoner in the Carmelite convent, where today is the Institut Catholique de Paris.

On September 2, 1792, together with other 92 priests and 3 bishops he is asked to answer the question: “Have you signed the Constitution civile du clergé?” By answering “no, my conscience forbids me to do so”, he is thrown down in the garden where guards, with bayonets, swords and spikes, kill him. The pope Pius XI beatified him, together with the other Martyrs of September, on October 17, 1926. André Grasset is the first Canadian to be beatified.

