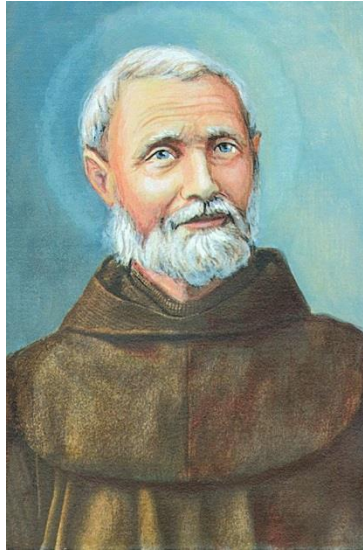


## **Blessed Frederic Janssoone (1838-1916):**

### **God's Pedlar**

**Feast Day: August 5**



### **His Life**

The son of a prosperous and devout farming family, Frederic Janssoone was born on November 19, 1838, in Ghyvelde, in the North of France. His father died when Frederic was only nine. He attended secondary school in Hazebrouck and then Dunkirk, but in 1856, he had to leave school to support his mother. He found work as an errand boy, and eventually had great success as a travelling salesman. After his mother died, in 1861, he was able to complete his studies. In 1864, he entered the novitiate of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor in Amiens.

Ordained a priest in 1870, he was a military chaplain during the Franco-Prussian War. Afterwards, he became assistant novice director and librarian. He then became superior of the community in Bordeaux. In 1876, he travelled to the Custody of the Holy Land. He became chaplain for the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Cairo, and gave preached retreats there and in Alexandria. Between 1878 and 1888, he was assistant to the head guard of the Sacred Sites in Palestine. He helped with administration, promoted a renewal of the custom of Holy Land pilgrimages, reestablished the ritual of the Way of the Cross in the streets of Jerusalem, and directed construction of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. He revised the set of customary regulations that had developed through the centuries between the Latins, the Greeks, and the Armenians for the use and maintenance of the shrines of Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulchre.

In 1881, Father Frederic made his first trip to Canada to establish an annual collection for the Holy Places and to submit to the Bishops a plan for the Commissariat for the Holy Land in Canada. He gave preached retreats throughout Quebec: in Quebec City, Portneuf, Trois-Rivières, Bécancour and Cap-de-la-Madeleine.

He settled in Canada for good in 1888. He lived in Trois-Rivières, where he became closely involved with the organization and development of the pilgrimage of Our Lady of the Rosary that had been started up by Father Luc Désilets at nearby Cap-de-la-Madeleine. He promoted the Franciscan Third Order in Quebec and New England. He created three outdoor Ways of the Cross, organized conferences and pilgrimages, and gave many preached retreats. He also wrote magazine and newspaper articles, booklets, works on the Holy Land, lives of Jesus, Mary, Saint Anne, Saint Joseph, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Anthony of Padua and the first Franciscan born in Canada, the Venerable Brother Didace Pelletier.

Father Frederic paved the way for the reestablishment in Canada of the Order of Friars Minor, which had ceased to exist with the death of the last Recollet in 1812. Father Frederic, the former travelling salesman, had become a peddler for God. He travelled from one parish to another in several Quebec dioceses, and went door-to-door selling his works. The profit from his sales went toward the establishment of several communities of consecrated life: the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the Poor Clares, the Franciscans of Trois-Rivières, and the Sister Adorers of the Precious Blood of Joliette. He died of stomach cancer in Montreal on August 4, 1916. Father Frederic is buried in Trois-Rivières. He was beatified by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II on September 25, 1988.

### **His Spirituality**

As a young man, Frederic Janssoone received the rigorous humanist college education typical of his era. He developed skill in business before turning to priestly life. His upbringing left him with a sensitive conscience, but he had unusual gifts for pastoral work.

He was always curious, and in Paris he researched the early Franciscan mission to Canada. He was a natural pedagogue, and could touch hearts and minds when he preached. He was comfortable presiding at liturgical celebrations and believed in making them resplendent as this would draw the minds of participants to God. He was among those who promoted a religious awakening in France following the Franco-Prussian War.

In Palestine, he demonstrated considerable diplomacy and skill in building churches. His devotion to the passion of Christ inspired him to reestablish the practice of praying the Way of the Cross in the streets of Jerusalem. His sincere and upright character as well as his spirit of justice and conciliation permitted him to develop the set of regulations that decreased the tensions between the Greeks, Armenians, and Latins regarding the shrines of the Holy Sepulchre and Bethlehem.

His preaching was leavened by his close observation of life, and it was delivered with energy. He was never afraid to be dramatic if it could touch the hearts of his listeners. He took advantage of his first-hand knowledge of the land where Jesus and Mary had lived to illustrate his sermons. His apostolic spirit characterized his promotion of the devotion of the Way of the Cross, pilgrimages, and the Franciscan Third Order. He played an important role as the initiator of a spiritual renewal based on meditation on the suffering and passion of Christ.

Father Frederic had an innate sense of publicity and used his facility for writing to add luster to the projects that he poured himself into. As soon as he began visiting Quebec, he published newspaper articles on the Holy Land to publicize his mission. The Canadians liked his style of preaching. The *Journal des Trois-Rivières* wrote that he was “one of the best preachers that one could encounter.”

He was humble and objective and he expressed his apostolic ambition with the prayer, "Let me bring to you, whoever comes to me." After he created the pilgrimage site at Our Lady of the Cape Shrine, he suggested to the Bishop that he entrust its management to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, "because they are very humble and have simplicity ways." His devotion to Mary was expressed in the promotion of prayer to Our Lady of the Rosary, which is at the heart of the pilgrimage to Cap-de-la-Madeleine. He founded the *Annales*, known today under the title *Notre-Dame-du-Cap*. His goodness and his reputation as a moving preacher earned him the nicknames "Holy Father" and "Good Father Frederic".

**For further information:**

English

<http://perefrederic.ca/en/>

[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/janssoone\\_frederic\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/janssoone_frederic_14E.html)

French

<http://perefrederic.ca/>

[http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/janssoone\\_frederic\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/janssoone_frederic_14E.html)

<http://catholicism.org/blessed-pere-frederic-janssoone.html>

<http://www.sanctuaire-ndc.ca/en/historical.html>

**Image:**

**Courtesy of O.D.M. pinxit, Editions Magnificat, Mont-Tremblant, Québec (<http://magnificat.ca>).**