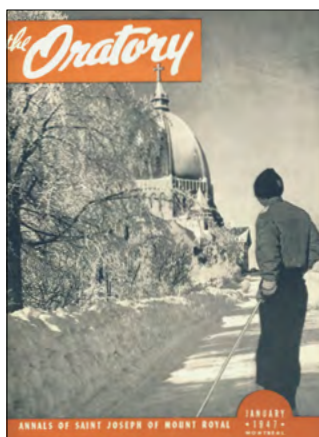
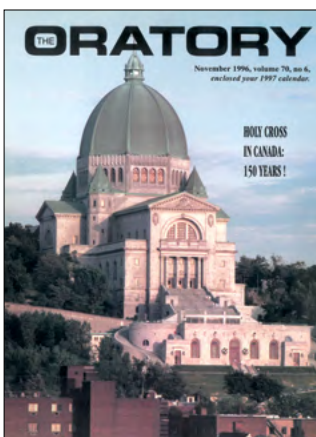
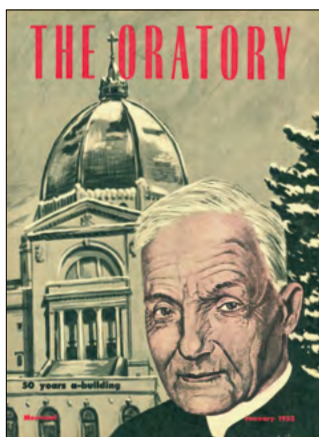
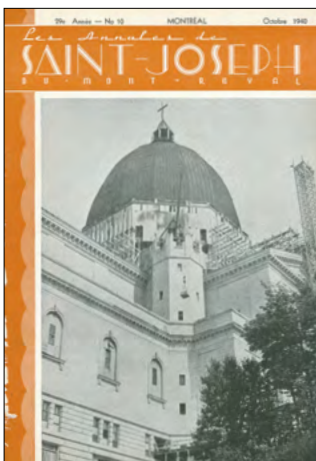
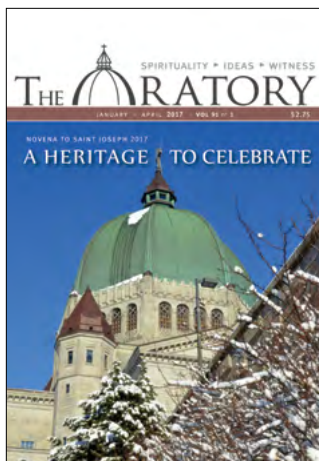
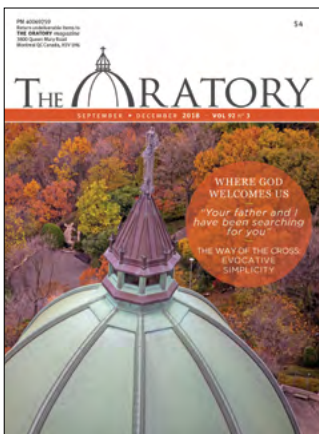
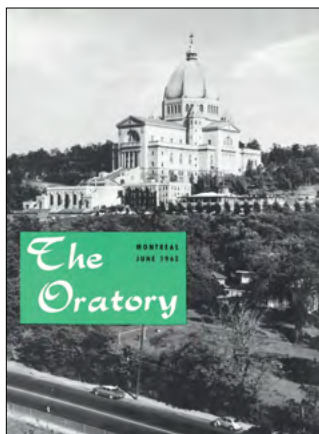




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The ORATORY

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FIRST STONE...





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Since 1927, The ORATORY magazine has been published by Saint Joseph’s Oratory of Mount Royal, a ministry of the Congregation of Holy Cross.



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In His House of Prayer



Despite differences and rivalries, the Olympic Games have the power to bring the whole world together in one city for a few weeks. This summer, the host city will be Paris, the City of Light. Through sport, the Olympics symbolize unity and peace, offering an apparent respite from international tension and conflict.

When I see the visitors and pilgrims who come to Saint Joseph’s Oratory, I often have the impression that the world also meets here in peace and unity. People come from far and wide. While some make a quick tourist stop, others take the time to explore every corner. Their visit leads them to Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary, Saint Brother André and Blessed Basile Moreau, CSC.

The music of the great organ or the hymns invite them to the celebration of the Eucharist and to recollection. For the Oratory’s primary mission is to be a place of prayer, where all are welcome. The words of the prophet Isaiah aptly express this call from God:

“I will lead them to my holy mountain. I will make them happy in my house of prayer. For my house shall be called: *House of prayer for all peoples.*” (Isaiah 56.1-7)

Since the tiny chapel of 1904, Mount Royal has been a sacred space where God invites... He has been able to count on a doorkeeper who has welcomed large crowds in His Name. Even today, Saint Brother André, that man of prayer, is always present on the mountain to welcome anyone in search of God, happiness, healing or hope.

During the summer, I invite you to come to the Oratory, the meeting place of Christ, “Light to enlighten the nations” (Luke 2:32).



Fr. Michael M. DeLaney, CSC
Rector

THE BASILICA

FROM THE FIRST STONE...

“Working for Saint Joseph,” these words ran through the pages of the magazine throughout the years, as the project to build a Basilica on the summit of Mount Royal unfolded. The editors of the *Annals* published by the Oratory came up with many original ideas to convince subscribers to contribute what they could to this daring project under the aegis of Saint Joseph.

In 1921, on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of Saint Joseph’s patronage decreed by the Pope, Most Rev. Paul Bruchési authorized the Religious of Holy Cross to take steps to raise the necessary funds to “build the Basilica as soon as possible.” After all, wasn’t it the Bishop of Montréal himself who launched the idea in 1912 with these prophetic words:

“The work is only just beginning and I foresee, in the perhaps not so distant future, a church, a Basilica worthy of Saint Joseph, standing on Mount Royal, across from the most magnificent of horizons.”

All Brother André had wanted was a chapel on the mountain where he could pray to Saint Joseph and care for the sick. With the Basilica, his dream took on new dimensions. The future temple was described as colossal, gigantic and grandiose. This visionary project rallies thousands of people, families and religious communities; the civil authorities also believe in it.

“HIS MIRACLE OF STONE”

On his visit in 1926, French journalist and writer François Veuillot wrote:

“(…) I have seen his miracle of stone. For this Brother André, who for nearly half a century has carried out his functions as college doorkeeper in the utmost simplicity, is in the process of building one of the most majestic and vast churches in Canada in honour of Saint Joseph on the northern slope of Mount Royal. (...) the little Brother has sparked an extraordinary devotional movement extending throughout the province of Quebec, beyond the Great Lakes, and all the way to the United States.”

This sums up the effervescence of all those who frequented the Mount Royal shrine or followed its development from afar.

“A MATERIAL MONUMENT THAT WILL DEFY THE CENTURIES”

The vast construction site survived the economic crisis of the 1930s and the Second World War (1939-1945). The project survived the death of the man who had been its humble worker from the start. “I have always left the Oratory in the hands of God,” Brother André had said repeatedly. On the day of his death, January 6, 1937, journalist Omer Héroux wrote in *Le Devoir*:

“This man leaves behind him a work of prodigious proportions, a material monument that will defy the centuries, a spiritual monument whose importance no one can measure. (...)”

What the journalist calls “prodigious,” the religious authorities call “providential.” In 1955, Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger called it “a work that sprang providentially,” and again, “a providential foundation,” i.e., the result of God’s intervention. But, God likes to need human beings to carry out his projects. Isn’t that what the call to Saint Joseph was all about?

AN ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE

Subscribers responded enthusiastically and generously to requests from the shrine’s rectors and the magazine’s editors. Fundraising campaigns were convincing: *Offer an hour of your salary for the future Basilica, Have you got your stone?, Collect your pennies for Saint Joseph, Who couldn’t pay for a foot of copper roofing?, Subscribers will have their own stained-glass window.* For each of these campaigns, the magazine informs its readers of the amounts raised, where they came from and the goal to be reached.

To help subscribers understand what the Basilica will look like, the *Annals* and then *The Oratory* magazine regularly publishes sketches, plans, models and photos of the building under construction, as well as of the artworks that will adorn its choir and nave. As the months go by, readers are kept informed of the progress of the work. The front cover shows the Basilica in a snowy setting, or in summer; seen from the street, from the roof of Collège Notre-Dame, or from Westmount, where only the imposing dome is visible.

IN THE BEGINNING

On August 31, 1924, Father Alfred Roy, CSC, asked the Most Rev. Pietro di Maria to bless the cornerstone of a temple to be erected in Canada, in honor of its patron, Saint Joseph. This first blessing marked the beginning of this great church where God has made his home to accomplish immeasurable benefits. A place where the highly colorful Saint Joseph invites us to meet him in front of the most magnificent of horizons. ✱

Nathalie Dumas, Editor

Central lancet of the luminous stained-glass window *The Miracle of the Saint-Joseph*, paid for with donations from subscribers to *Annals* (*The Oratory* magazine). Artwork by Marius Plamondon.

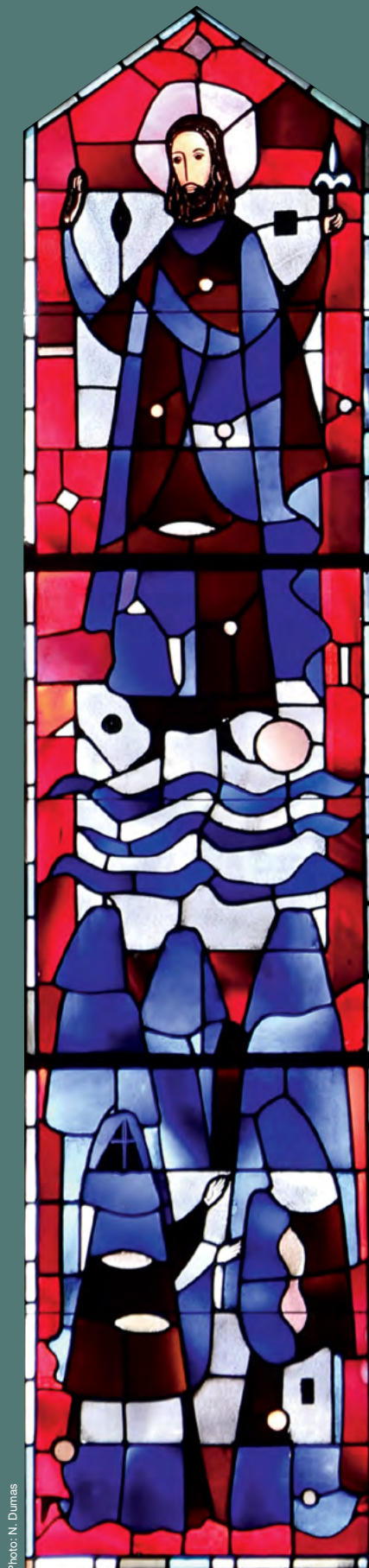


Photo: N. Dumas

1924. A glance towards the north side of Mount Royal reveals the Crypt Church inaugurated in December 1917, the rectory of the Religious of Holy Cross and the original chapel, which has been moved to the west side. All seems peaceful and conducive to the contemplation of a place of prayer.

However, since Fall 1922, a construction site has been buzzing with activity behind the Crypt Church: some sixty workers have been busy with the excavation work required to level the ground where the Basilica, already the talk of the town, will rise.

Midway between the preliminary work and the start of construction in 1926, the Basilica's cornerstone was blessed on August 31, 1924. A look back at this foundational event.

Prelude to the gigantic work

In the January 1924 issue, the *Annales de Saint-Joseph* published a text on the third centenary of Canada's consecration to Saint Joseph. "This anniversary cannot go unnoticed," says the editor, "(...) since Saint Joseph has deigned

to make Mount Royal his preferred sanctuary (...)." It announces that the entire month of March will be devoted to "bearing witness to our profound gratitude to Saint Joseph, who has so visibly protected the country." Similarly,



the Oratory is planning "towards September, with God's help," major events in view of "the blessing of the cornerstone of the future Basilica." (ASJ, January 1924 French issue, p. 11)

Throughout the year, the magazine publishes a number of sermons, poems and historical studies on devotion to Saint Joseph in Canada. It covers large-scale pilgrimages, the most spectacular of which is undoubtedly that of the Franciscan Tertiaries, linked to the 17th-century Recollects missionaries who are credited with the consecration to Saint Joseph. This extraordinary pilgrimage brought together 20,000 people on May 12, 1924, the Solemnity of the Patronage of Saint Joseph.



Most Rev. Pietro di Maria, Apostolic Delegate.
– Photo: Saint Joseph's Oratory's Archives

Blessing of the cornerstone

Labour Day, August 31, 1924, was the ideal occasion for a prestigious religious and ceremonial event: the blessing of the cornerstone of the future church. At the time, the Oratory was a natural gathering place for the city's French- and English-speaking Catholic unions, and they invited the entire population to join them on this exceptional day. The program calls for a solemn meeting at 3 p.m., "a prelude to the gigantic work that will continue thereafter." (ASJ, September 1924 French issue, p. 11)

Newspapers of the time estimated that 35,000 people turned out for the occasion. Ecclesiastical personalities added to the solemn decorum of the event: Apostolic Delegate Most Reverend Pietro di Maria, canons and bishops from the Montréal, Laurentian, Lanaudière and Montérégie regions, not to mention the Fathers of Holy Cross and representatives of congregations, colleges, seminaries, novitiates, etc., were all present. The Mayor of Montréal, Charles Duquette, dignitaries from Colombia, Cuba and France, as well as leading figures from the Catholic labour and trade union movements, were among the public figures present.

The *Annales* publishes the official speeches of the ceremony in the October issue (p.325-326). Father Alfred Roy, CSC, rector and provincial

superior of the Congregation of Holy Cross, expresses his gratitude to the Apostolic Delegate, highlighting how popes, notably Pius IX, have encouraged devotion to Saint Joseph, "Head of the Holy Family, Protector and Patron of the Universal Church."

In his address, Di Maria spoke particularly moving words about the beginnings of the work:

"(...) a small medal, placed at the foot of a tree, and constant and fervent prayer, first gave rise to a humble chapel, then to the Oratory where crowds soon flocked, and finally, in the near future, to a grandiose temple. (...) Let all come to this shrine, for all will find help and consolation."

The cornerstone is blessed on a temporary platform erected in front of the Crypt Church's central door. A parchment of authenticity, copies of newspapers and magazines, and a few coins are placed inside the stone.



In the January issue of the *Annales*, the editor wrote that 1924 would be "the year of Saint Joseph." History will also record this as the date of origin of the Basilica erected in his honour on Mount Royal. ✱

By David Bureau and Nathalie Dumas

Building the Basilica was no easy task. Many unforeseen events punctuated this long adventure. However, the Religious of the Oratory, pilgrims and benefactors never ceased to believe in this colossal project, year in, year out, inspired by Brother André's unfailing faith and confidence in Saint Joseph: "It will succeed, the temple of Saint Joseph will be completed!"

COLOSSAL PROJECT

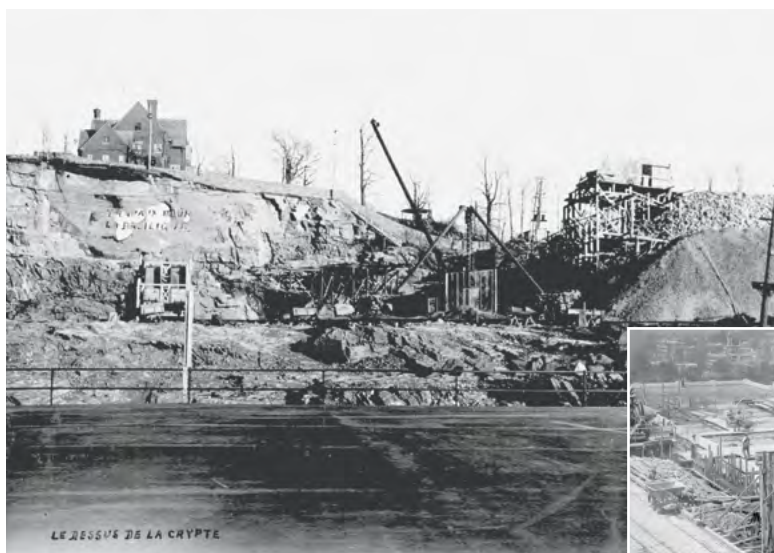
The Excavation Work

SEPTEMBER 1922

Fall 1922 sees the beginning of the excavations, which will last three years. The terrain is graded by removing the earth from the rock, and the stone is blasted where the foundation walls are to be built.

"In winter as in summer, an average of sixty men have pitted themselves against the bare rock, digging a deep breach into the mountainside behind the Crypt Church to prepare a plateau 425 feet deep by 200 feet wide."

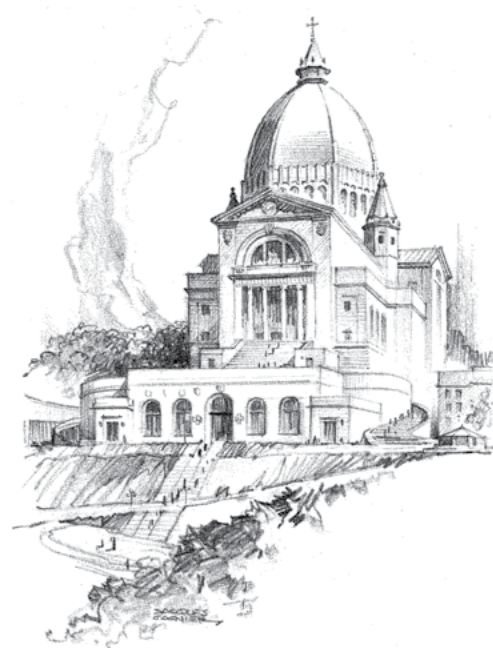
(Émile Deguire, *Annales de Saint-Joseph*, July 1925)



A view from the roof of the Crypt Church reveals the area where the Basilica will be erected.



The construction site in its early stages, with no apparent structure.



The Plans

DECEMBER 1922

On December 15, Architects Viau and Venne officially present Oratory authorities with their plans for the future Basilica in the style inspired from Italian Renaissance. Two years later, at Bishop Gauthier's request, the plans are submitted to European architects, who are unanimous in their praise for the work and offer a few recommendations.

The Cornerstone

AUGUST 1924

The Apostolic Delegate, Most Rev. Pietro di Maria, presides over the blessing of the cornerstone of the future church on August 31, 1924. This event concludes the tercentenary celebrations of Saint Joseph's patronage in Canada (1624-1924). The day also marks the official inauguration of the Basilica's construction.



The church under construction seems firmly anchored in the mountain.

1927

Visitors can discover what the future church will look like through the scale model (Carli-Petrucchi) on display in a small pavilion, and through illustrations as seen in the English version newly published *Annals of Saint Joseph's Shrine* as well as in the annual calendar and on postcards.

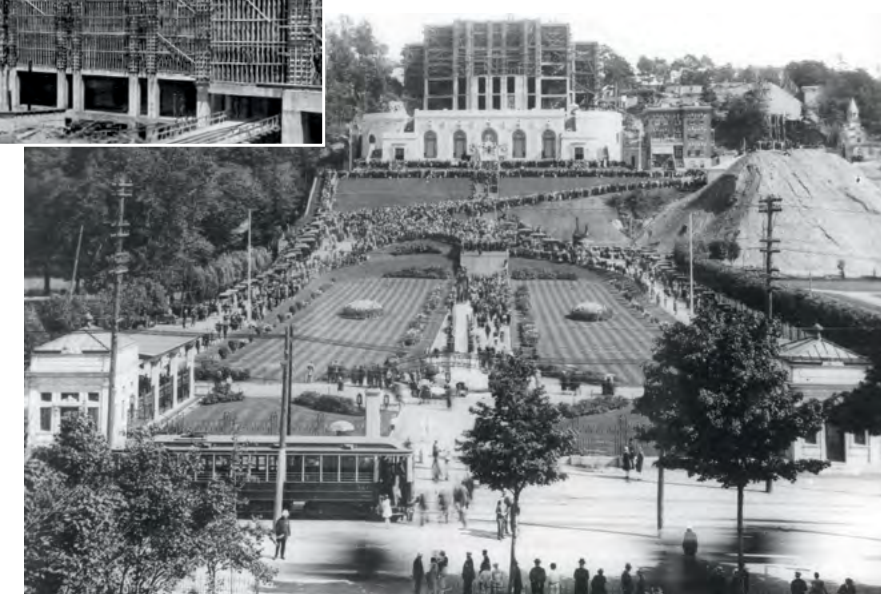


MAY 1927

Over a thousand sacks of concrete are poured in wooden cribs built for the purpose. By summer, pilgrims are able to get a sense of the size of the building, which will measure 100 feet high by 335 deep by 200 wide in the transept. Once the concrete has hardened and the forms have been removed, the building's frame is revealed to the top of the lower sections of the walls. The work is completed in September.



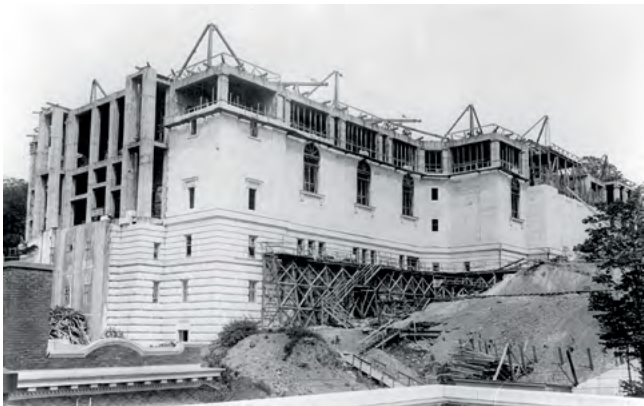
The 50,000 pilgrims who flocked to the Oratory on Labour Day, September 4, 1927, observed the impressive size of the future church.



The Granite Exterior

JANUARY 1930

On January 21, 1930, a contract is signed with Mr. Ernest Jobin of *Silver Granite* in Saint-Samuel to quarry, hew, and transport 14,800 tonnes of granite for the sum of \$1,207,204 (the parvis and the dome are not included in the contract). Payments are to be made in several stages and over several years.



The First Stone

AUGUST 1930

The delivery of the granite blocks to the Oratory is the occasion for another official ceremony on August 15. The event is reported in the newspapers. *“At three o’clock yesterday afternoon, an impressive yet simple ceremony took place at Saint Joseph’s Oratory of Mount Royal to lay the first stone of the future Basilica, the first to be dedicated to Saint Joseph.”* (*La Presse*, August 16, 1930, p. 37) Brother André, the humble worker of the first hour, had the honour of applying a little mortar for the laying of this first granite stone.



The photographer from *La Presse* captured the symbolic gesture showing Brother André with a trowel in hand.

Opposite, entrepreneurs, architects, and clergy witnessing this historic moment: Émile-Napoléon Boileau, J.-W. Caron, Ulric Boileau, Dalbé Viau and Alphonse Venne, Brother André, CSC, Fr. Elphège Hébert, CSC.

Photos: *La Presse*, 16 août 1930. Archives nationales du Québec à Montréal, Fonds *La Presse* (06M, P833, S3, D712).

A Popular Fundraising

1931

The *Annals* make an appeal to its subscribers’ generosity in order to give Saint Joseph’s temple “a rich garment of granite” that will defy the centuries. *“Who is there who could not pay for a stone? There are of all sizes and values (...)”* (*ASJ*, July 1931) The call is answered! By year’s end, the lower sections of the walls and the entire perimeter of the Basilica have been covered in granite.



From Stoppage to Mobilization

1932-1937

The work scheduled for 1932, including the façade colonnade, was completed in July. However, as the economic situation remained unfavorable, the Oratory had to suspend work. But the death of Brother André on January 6, 1937 sparked an unprecedented mobilization. Everyone wanted to contribute to the work of the beloved brother. The site was reopened on April 21, 1937, with workers daring to brave the heights.



The Dome

To reduce the cost of building the dome, a technical change was proposed by French architect Dom Paul Bellot, a Benedictine monk. In association with Canadian architects Lucien Parent and Rodolphe Tourville, he presented plans for a dome stripped of ornamentation, and the tall structure incorporates a second dome inside. Between the two, a circular space will accommodate an observation center. The outer dome, topped by a lantern, is made of a seven-inch-thick concrete shell.

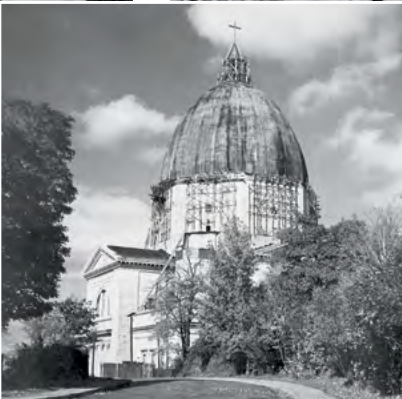


FALL 1937

It takes from October 18 to 25, 1937, to erect the immense scaffolding and wooden formwork needed for the outer dome. The pouring of the concrete continues day and night from November 6 to 15. The Basilica finally gets a roof!

1938

Construction of the inner dome.



A dome taking shape and revealing itself in just two months.

The Copper Roof

1939-1941

The dome is covered in copper, then the cupola and the roofs of the nave, side-aisles, transept and sacristy. The Basilica’s roof represents a total surface area of 80,000 square feet.



Copper is laid on one of the four turrets.

The Cross on Top

1941

The 22-foot cross is installed on top of the dome’s lantern at a height of 853 feet above sea level. It is the highest point in the city of Montréal.

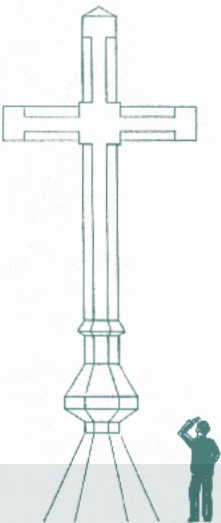


Illustration: *ASJ*, March 1941

Towards completion

The exterior of the Basilica was finally completed in 1942. But it would take another 25 years for the interior to be completed, organized for liturgy and adorned with works of art. The story continues today with the development of an observation center at the top of the dome as it was planned in 1937. The culmination of this colossal work. (*D.B., N.D.*) Photos: Saint Joseph’s Oratory’s Archives



May your thought never leave me

Help me, Lord, to be for everyone,
The person who is never disturbed,
Who receives with kindness,
Who listens with sympathy,
Who gives with love.

Help me, Lord, to be for everyone,
The person we're always sure to meet
When we need someone to talk to.

Help me, Lord,
To be that reassuring presence,
To offer that restful friendship,
To radiate this joyful peace,
To be gathered in You, for You.

And for this, Lord,
May your thought never leave me,
May your truth dwell in me,
May your law be my delight.

And so, Lord,
In the simplicity of my heart,
In my daily life,
I can help others
To feel closer to you,
To recognize your love,
In a gesture of welcome
That in your name I do.
Amen.

Fr. Robert Riber (1935-2013)

*(Translation of the original French prayer called
"Aide-moi Seigneur à être pour tous et toutes")*



A Saint for Our Times

NEW PARISH WEST OF THE RICHELIEU

Looking to the future with Saint Brother André

A beautiful stylized letter A opens the text of the episcopal decree erecting the new parish of the Diocese of Saint-Jean-Longueuil under the name of “Saint-Frère-André”. The new parish community brings together the four former parishes of the La Frontière sector: Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Carmel, Saint-Valentin, Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle and Saint-Paul-de-l’Île-aux-Noix, all located west of the Richelieu River, some 12 miles from New York State.

The inaugural Mass, presided over by Bishop Claude Hamelin, was celebrated on April 14, 2024 in the Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle church, attended by nearly 200 faithful and several priests. “Even if this celebration is a joyful one, we must be aware of the suffering of many parishioners who are losing their place of worship,” he declared. “We have to make room for them,” reported the local newspaper *Coup d’œil* on April 25. The bishop’s decision to dissolve these parishes is the result of

various factors: financial difficulties, a drop in the number of volunteers and a decline in Sunday worship.

In the decree signed on January 6, 2024, Bishop Hamelin recalled the need for “the parish to have the human and financial resources to adequately fulfill its mission” of being a community of faith and charity, a sign of God’s presence in the world. Saint André was therefore elected to accompany the new parish community and its challenges for the future.

AN INSPIRING PERSONALITY

“The toponymy committee [of the Diocese of Saint-Jean-Longueuil] was guided in its choice by an interest in finding an inspiring vocable for the pastoral future of this area, and by a concern to highlight a religious personality from the Montérégie,” writes the journalist from

Coup d’œil, in the January 18, 2024 edition. Then follow the features of the spiritual figure of the Brother of Holy Cross: “According to the members of the committee, Brother André devoted his life to service, he knew how to mobilize the faithful to realize the Oratory project, he was a source of hope for the people he came into contact with, and he knew how to develop a spirituality rooted in trust in Providence.”

A FIRST GATHERING

Father Bernard Antoine, CSC, Vice-Rector for Pastoral, represented Saint Joseph’s Oratory at the first Mass celebrated by the new parish community on April 14. “It was a great moment of faith and pride for the parishioners,” he said. “They were very proud to have Brother André as their patron saint.” For the occasion, the large reliquary was installed in the church as a discreet and prayerful presence of the saint. Children presented a banner bearing the portrait of their new friend, around which they had drawn their open hands as a sign of welcome.

Yes, the new chapter in this community’s history begins with the letter A... like André! (N. Dumas)

The Order of St. André Bessette



Established in 2021, The Order of St. André Bessette is the highest honour that the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board, located in mid-western Ontario, bestows upon a member of its community. The award recognizes an exceptional contribution to academia, spiritual life and/or philanthropic achievement. The 2024 recipient is Ms. Erma Weernik who is recognized for her exceptional dedication to spiritual life, volunteerism, teaching, mentoring, and academic development. Congratulations!



Brother André was the guest of his cousin Joséphine Bessette and Narcisse Saint-Denis, who were celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary surrounded by their family. Montréal, July 1936.

In August...

We celebrate Saint Brother André, born Alfred Bessette on August 9, 1845, son of Clothilde Foisy and Isaac Bessette.

We celebrate his origins with a pilgrimage to his birthplace on Sunday, August 25, 2024*, in Mont-Saint-Grégoire, where a monument was erected in his honor in 1945. A small stone stele commemorates the location of the family home in rang du Grand-Bois.

We celebrate his belonging to the great human family, and more specifically, to his large family of “Bessette”, “Foisy” and so many other names. A tree whose roots and branches stretch from the Montérégie region to the Eastern Townships and several American states.

We celebrate his path marked by hard work: from apprentice shoemaker and baker to worker in the textile mills, then religious in the service of the Lord and his brothers. We celebrate the doorkeeper, the confidant, the friend, the builder.

We celebrate bread, thread and earth. We celebrate mountains, fields and rivers; churches and mills. We celebrate the movement of life. And we give thanks.

We celebrate Saint Brother André, our humble super star.

We celebrate one of our own, universally known and recognized as an intercessor with God. We celebrate Saint André and his presence among us. (N. Dumas)

***Annual pilgrimage organized by Saint Joseph’s Oratory**

Schedule: 11 a.m., Mass at the parish church; 12:30 p.m., Lunch at the sugar shack; 2:30 p.m., Prayer at the monument.

Package: \$35 (bus transportation and lunch included).

Departure: 9 a.m. **Return:** 4:30 p.m. Tickets on sale at the Information and Blessing Office OR at 514 733-8211 ext. 2795.

www.saint-joseph.org

A Vow to Saint Joseph

By Pierre Robert

When we set out to find our roots, we must not forget our spiritual roots. What are the spiritual roots of French Canadians? These include the great devotions that were established here. Who were the preferred saints that people often prayed to?

We can confidently name the main devotions as the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Anne, and later the Sacred Heart. Three major shrines in Quebec bear witness to this: Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, Notre-Dame-du-Cap and Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. In addition, devotions to the Holy Family more or less began in New France. When Bishop de Laval instituted the Feast of the Holy Family in 1684, it was a first for the Universal Church.

It's widely known that Saint John the Baptist is the patron saint of French Canadians everywhere, as Quebec's national holiday stems from this attachment. However, fewer people are aware that Saint Joseph is the patron saint of Canada. This continues to this day, as the liturgy of the Catholic Church designates Saint Joseph as the "principal patron of Canada." (He's referred to as "principal" in relation to the North American Martyrs, who are designated as "secondary patrons of Canada.")

But this designation raises all sorts of questions. For example, when did it start? Who decided on it? Under what circumstances? It also leads to more complex questions, such as: what does "Canada" refer to in this consecration?

An era, a backdrop, a devotion

This consecration took place in 1624 in Québec City. Founded in 1608, the would-be city was still just a settlement of some 50 residents under Champlain's leadership. Trois-Rivières had not yet been founded (1634), nor had Montréal (1642). In other words, it goes back to the very beginning, but that beginning was a seed destined to grow into a massive tree, as what began wasn't just a town, but rather the first French settlement in North America: New France.

Champlain, whose role included evangelizing Indigenous people, had brought the Recollects over from France. This French branch of the Franciscans arrived in 1615. Four members of the Recollect Order had come over: Father Denis Jamet, Father Joseph Le Caron, Father Jean Dolbeau and Brother Pacifique Duplessis. Father Jamet was called back to France in 1617, and Father Le Caron became the head of the mission in New France.

It's also worth pointing out that the 17th century was a period of deep devotion to Saint Joseph. It was a century of spiritual renewal that saw this devotion spread

nearly everywhere. However, contrary to popular belief, the devotion dates back to the late Middle Ages and grew during the Renaissance and the Council of Trent. The Franciscans played an important role in its development. Originating with Francis of Assisi, who had a strong attachment to the Saviour's humanity and promoted the nativity scene, i.e. the pictorial representation of the birth of Jesus, the Franciscans were interested in the real life circumstances of Jesus's life, and therefore his adoptive father, Saint Joseph.

In short, the devotion to Saint Joseph was part of the backdrop of the times, and the Recollects, a branch of the Franciscan Order, brought it over with them.

An official consecration

Arriving with his brothers in 1615, Father Joseph Le Caron quickly made his way to Huron territory. There, he celebrated the first mass and baptized the first Huron, giving him the name of his own patron saint, Joseph. After returning to Québec City, he became the head of the Recollects in 1617. In 1624, he wrote a long report detailing events in New France to a French official, Charles de Ramsay de Noues. In it, he stated the following:

Since that time, we have made a great solemnity, [...] by a vow that we made to Saint Joseph, whom we chose as the Patron of the country and protector of this nascent Church. [Translation]

The text says "since that time." This refers to Father Le Caron's return from Huron territory to Québec City. Since the Recollects arrived on July 16, 1624, the ceremony most likely took place between that date and August 15, when the ship carrying the letter to Charles de Ramsay left for France.



Wood statue of Saint Joseph, Archdiocese of Québec chapel. – Photo: N. Dumas

The letter describes a solemn consecration to Saint Joseph. The entire local population was there, including, in all likelihood, Champlain, his wife and several Indigenous people. The consecration was therefore official.

The agreement of the population and the Church

This consecration could have gone unheeded. On the contrary, public support for it was such that the consecration was carried on by subsequent generations. In 1637, a major celebration was held in honour of the patron saint, and was repeated for several years. The first Jesuits to arrive also considered Saint Joseph to be the “patron saint of this New France,” as Jean de Brébeuf wrote in *Relations* in 1634.

The devotion to Saint Joseph is one of the defining features of the Christian faith in French-speaking North America.

Church officials followed suit. In a 1668 pastoral letter, François de Laval, the first bishop of Québec, mentions the “blessed Saint Joseph, special Patron of this nascent Church.” In 1703, Most Rev. de Saint-Vallier, the second bishop, published the first *Rituel du diocèse de Québec*, in which he declared the Feast of Saint Joseph, “the first Patron of the country,” a holiday. Saint Joseph was therefore officially celebrated as the patron saint of New France or Canada.

In March 1815, Bishop Plessis declared April 6 “the day on which we commemorate Saint Joseph, the country’s first patron saint.” And even later, in 1859, the Holy See formally approved naming Saint Joseph as patron saint.

In fact, the devotion to Saint Joseph is rightly claimed to be one of the defining features of the Christian faith in French-speaking North America.

From New France to Canada

There’s an additional chapter in the story of the consecration to Saint Joseph. We’ve mentioned New France and Canada. The term “Canada” originally referred to the Québec City area. It came to designate the heart of New France, the area established on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. New France went on to grow by leaps and bounds, stretching from Acadia (Cape Breton) to Louisiana (New Orleans).

After the Conquest of New France and the ceding of New France to England in 1763, Canada was divided into Upper Canada, which was upriver (Ontario) and Lower Canada, which was downriver (Quebec). United in 1841, Canada eventually became a confederation under the *Constitution Act* of 1867.

Therefore, when we refer to Saint Joseph as the “patron saint of Canada,” we mean that he is first and foremost the protector of New France. This can be extended to all descendants of New France, and ultimately to Canada as a whole. ✠

This study is based on research published by Saint Joseph’s Oratory of Mount Royal Centre for Research and Documentation.



Life at the Oratory

By the Communications Department

Tribute to Saint Joseph

Pilgrims flocked to Saint Joseph’s Oratory on March 19 to celebrate Joseph, the Spouse of Mary. Solemn Masses marked the 4th centenary of Canada’s consecration to Saint Joseph. The devotional gestures and prayerful reverence demonstrated the deep affection of the people for Saint Joseph, who has been honored at the Oratory since 1904.

The great Feast was preceded by a Novena —9 days of preparation and prayer— during which the guest preachers highlighted the figure of Joseph, “Companion of our history”. The daily webcast celebrations were very popular, bringing together a large community of friends of Saint Joseph. The Feast was embellished with white and yellow lilies, which pilgrims were able to purchase to take home or offer to Saint Joseph.



Photo: Martin Brideau

The Great Week

For Christians, Easter, the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection, is the high point of the liturgical year. At Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal, this was reflected in the highest attendance of the Spring, with almost 30,000 faithful present on Sunday March 31, reaffirming their faith in the Risen Christ.

In the preceding days, almost 60,000 people took part in Holy Week services. A great week that ended the month of March in beauty and light.

The fire and light of the Paschal candle are passed on to the crowd by young people during the Easter Vigil on the evening of March 30.

Totally delighted

The excitement generated by the total solar eclipse on Monday April 8, 2024 drew more than 2,000 visitors of all ages to Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal, who set up at various points around the site, including the terrace, the Basilica's grand staircase and the esplanade. Equipped with the appropriate goggles, visitors were able to watch the moon gradually hide the sun. At around 3:27 p.m., a spontaneous outcry and applause marked the moment when the sun disappeared completely, casting a long shadow over the crowd, the Basilica and the city. A feeling of surprise, amazement and delight pervaded observers during this brief moment of unusual darkness. A historic minute!



Photo: Nathalie Dumas

Hundreds of people, including many families and students, climbed up to the Oratory to observe the solar eclipse on April 8.

Candlelit concert



Photo: Martin Brideau

The immersive musical experience "Concert sous les chandelles" (Groupe Izanto, Isaac Jobin producer) was presented in the Crypt Church of Saint Joseph's Oratory on the evening of Friday, May 10. A string quartet performed Vivaldi's sublime *Four Seasons*, as well as great film melodies. "A magnificent concert!" commented the audience, who appreciated the warm decor created by the candles. The candles also enhanced the architecture of the Crypt Church. With over 800 concerts to its credit, this original project has visited numerous churches in Quebec.

The echo of the first notes

Last May, visitors to the site could hear the tinkling of the Oratory's carillon bells. A sneak preview! Cyril Paccard from the renowned French foundry firm came to continue adjusting the instrument. He completed the installation of the keyboard connection system to the 62 bells. This complex work began last autumn.

A year ago, the restored original bells and the new ones were hoisted into the luminous campanile adjacent to the future reception pavilion. There are only ten traditional carillons in operation in Canada, and only one in Quebec — at Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal!



Photo: Céline M. Barbeau

Cyril Paccard, from the 7th generation to operate the family business, world specialist in carillons.

The story of the Oratory's workers

A lecture on the men and women who helped build Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal was presented on Sundays, May 12 and 19, by David Bureau, Oratory archivist. Textual documents, photographs and plans told the story of the workers and the challenges of the great building work sites of the early 20th century.

Nearly fifty people attended the talk, which highlighted both the Oratory's architectural heritage and its craftsmen. This presentation may be repeated later in the year: keep an eye on the schedule of activities at the shrine.

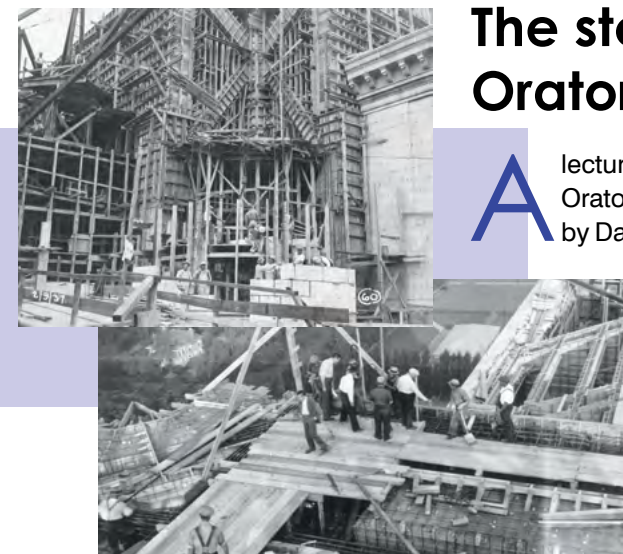


Photo : Saint Joseph's Oratory's Archives

Pueri Cantores sing for Peace

They came together to offer a concert for peace. Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal, Les Petits Chanteurs de Granby, Les Petits Chanteurs de Beauport, Les Petits Chanteurs de Trois-Rivières and Les Petits Chanteurs de la Maîtrise du Cap gave a moving performance at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 19, at the Oratory. The five choirs, members of the Federation of *Pueri Cantores Canada*, brought together nearly 200 choristers. In the morning, the young singers joined voices with the Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal, under the direction of Andrew Gray, for Mass in the Basilica, much to the delight of the pilgrims.



Photo: Facebook Page, Les Petits Chanteurs de Granby

The choirs rehearse in the Basilica, directed by Andrew Gray.

“I HAVE ALWAYS
LEFT THE ORATORY
IN GOD’S HANDS.”

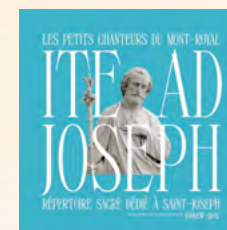
– Saint André Bessette, CSC

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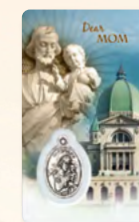
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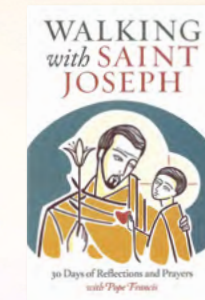
Oil of Saint Joseph



Laminated prayer
cards: Mom, Dad,
Son, Daughter

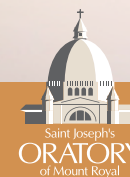


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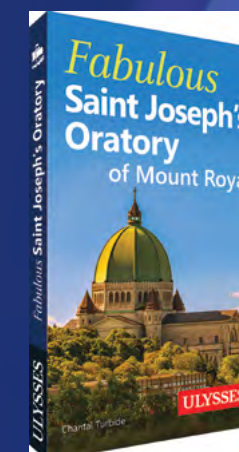
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