

The Friend of Brother André



SPRING 2020

Saint Joseph's Oratory according to Pierre Piché:

A DIAMOND WITH MANY FACETS



Photo: Antoine Saito

"Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is like a diamond with many facets. With the major development project that is currently taking place, we're in the process of creating a new display case for it," remarked Pierre Piché, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal Foundation. What a beautiful image, and what an evocative comparison.

Pierre Piché is using that image to represent the Oratory's four facets: the spirituality and unconditional welcome we find there—which he refers to as its underlying mission—as well as its heritage, its culture and its natural setting. "The Oratory contributes to the well-being of so many and promotes living in harmony," added the Foundation's Chairman. "The social and economic developments taking place at the turn of the 20th century were instrumental in the Oratory's success, together with Brother André's aura as a miracle worker, of course," he noted, pointing out that the Oratory attracted a large popular following right from the start.

And although healing is often associated with the site's vocation, "people's well-being also comes from nature and from music," Pierre Piché observed.

"The Oratory's geography atop Mount Royal is one of the features that draws people to it. It's a space that brings people together," he said. The Oratory encourages people to live in harmony and becomes an especially inviting gathering place for communities that are newcomers to this country."

Major economic impact

In addition to the shrine's importance at the human and community levels, Pierre Piché highlighted its major economic impact for Montreal. Currently Vice-President of Power Corporation, Mr. Piché has had a career path that includes more than 30 years of experience in international finance and economics. He knows this area. "It's true that religious tourism generates major economic benefits through visitors from other countries as well as our fellow citizens living outside Montreal," he explained. "Tourists visiting the Oratory also go to other locations in the city and spend money at stores, restaurants and hotels."

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The Saint Joseph's Oratory Foundation is dedicated to supporting Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. Its role is to ensure the Oratory's sustainability and contribute to its development. With a view to philanthropic development, the Foundation has opened its arms to the corporate sector, major donors and other foundations. It considers itself a tool and an ally in helping Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal to fulfill its mission.



“I HOPE
THEY LEFT
HAPPY”

The canonization of Brother André on October 17, 2010 was a pivotal moment for the thousands who proudly participated in this great event. What are the lingering effects, ten years later? We strongly believe that Saint Brother André is still present among us. This unassuming man—this brother to all, this friend to whom so many men and women confided their pain and their joy—has an important message for us and for our world.

Every day, people make the climb to Saint Joseph’s Oratory to gather at his tomb. In a large visitor’s book, they leave messages conveying their suffering, their destitution and, most importantly, their trust in the man who, although unseen, continues to welcome and accept them unconditionally. When they leave, their hearts are a little lighter, as if they had unburdened themselves to a good friend.

In March 1921, *Montreal Star* journalist S. Morgan-Powell came to the Oratory to observe the feast of its eponymous saint. After the ceremony of the day, Morgan-Powell followed Brother André to his office and asked him whether all the visitors had been healed. Brother André’s answer? “You should not talk about it that way. Simply say, ‘I hope they left happy.’” (*Annales de Saint-Joseph*, May 1921, p.139 [translation])

The message that Brother André gave out again and again was simple: “God is good, and He takes care of you.” In his acceptance of others, he bore witness to God’s acceptance. That is exactly what Saint Joseph’s Oratory provides, in a world where far too many of our brothers and sisters are in need of a friend on their journey through life.

Saint Brother André was, is and will forever be to all a friend, a brother, a saint. And that is a source of happiness for us!

Father Claude Grou, CSC
Rector



Some certificates from the “stones campaign” have been kept in the Oratory’s Archives; this one bears the number 56.

Do you have your stone?

For more than a decade, this question appeared time and again in the pages of the *Annales de Saint-Joseph*. The February 1937 issue featured an article by the Superior of the Oratory, Father Albert Cousineau, CSC, entitled *Projet de construction* (Construction Project), which reintroduced the campaign first launched in 1931.

The idea was simple: convince as many faithful as possible to help build the basilica, then still under construction. After paying loving tribute to the work of Brother André, Father Cousineau announced the sale of the stones on the building’s facade.

Everyone was invited to give what they could: “there are stones for every budget,” he wrote. “Large and small. Do not forget, Saint Joseph’s Oratory was built with the coins of the poor. Do not be ashamed if you have only a little to give. So come and choose your stone!”

The least expensive stones cost \$5, while the highest priced ones were offered for \$100. No donation was refused, and those who could not afford a stone on their own could purchase one as part of a group.

Donors received a numbered diagram of the facade with a star indicating the position of “their” stone. The diagram was suitable for framing and bore the rector’s signature, serving as an actual certificate. In recognition of their generous gifts, the Oratory published the donors’ names in the monthly issues of the *Annales de Saint-Joseph*.

The campaign ran until 1941, and included the stones that make up the transepts and the eight sides of the dome.

David Bureau,
archivist

Public figures from different walks of life share their love of Saint Joseph's Oratory to support its fundraising drive.

The Oratory seen by...



"When I'm at the Oratory, I feel at home. My parents were Grand Associates of Brother André and were staunch believers. And that didn't die with them! They're gone now, but I've taken on this tradition. I continue to be a fan of the Oratory and a fan of Brother André especially. I feel that Brother André is part of the lineage of Quebec personalities who represent us. This place is our place. And it's also universal. In my 40-some years at Saint Joseph's Oratory, I've seen people come from everywhere, regardless of their denomination or their religion. It's a place where everyone is invited, where everyone is welcome, and they leave here 'fuller' than when they arrived."

Grégory CHARLES – Musician, entertainer, comedian and singer-songwriter



"The Oratory has room for everyone. No matter who you are. In a humble way, I try to do as Brother André did: welcome others with openness and compassion. The Oratory is an international place and a truly sacred place. I'm Italian, and it's a place that's important to me. When I first arrived in Montréal and I was homesick or sad, I would come here to find peace. It's an ever-living sanctuary where God comes to meet us. Just go to Saint Joseph's Oratory, where the door is wide open. I hope the Oratory will always keep that flame burning, keep that love flowing, and I hope it will remain a meeting place for all nations and all religions. But the greatest of these is love!"

Sister Angèle RIZZARDO – Chef, professor and television host



"Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is a reference point that helps me connect with who I am and also who I want to be. I'm as inspired by the place itself as by the people I meet there. This is where I made the big decisions that have guided me in my personal life and my professional life. As a business leader, I often arrive here a little flustered, caught up in my thoughts, and it takes a moment to settle down. With the inner peace you find there, the Oratory helps you make decisions that sometimes demand courage. We have to trust in these places, which continue to be guideposts for people seeking meaning in their lives."

Robert DUTTON – Entrepreneur and professor, HÉC-Montréal

Join them!

Help save and develop the heritage treasure that is Saint Joseph's Oratory.



View the videos of these testimonials and many more at oratory360.com



Give for your love of heaven!



"For me as a Montrealer, the Oratory symbolizes our history, our heritage and our culture. Heaven knows I've spent a lot of time in churches! As a child, I always visited the Oratory with a deep sense of wonder. It's a symbol high on our beautiful mountain, guiding us and anchoring us as Montrealers. As a musician and orchestra conductor, I find the Oratory evokes a lot of musical memories. It also represents *Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal*, who I listen to with even greater enjoyment now that my nephews Maël and Albert are in the choir school. A source of great pride! Whenever I visit the Oratory, I marvel at the acoustics and I have a chance to experience that spirituality, that tranquillity we so need."

Yannick NÉZET-SÉGUIN – Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain



"I'm going to light a lantern for joy, happiness, prosperity and love! If only to be a part of this magnificent fresco of light. For me, Saint Joseph's Oratory represents the starting point of the 1980s, when I arrived in Montreal. I used to come here regularly to recharge and renew. It gave me a chance to calm down, to take care of myself. At the time, climbing all those steps was supporting a kind of rite I gave myself. Why is Saint Joseph's Oratory important? Because it's an essential landmark that all tourists should see, as should every self-respecting Quebecer. Montrealers should come at least once a year. I think I had forgotten how important and magnificent this place really is!"

Denis GAGNON – Fashion designer



"Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is one of the great treasures of Montreal, Quebec and the world. Of course it's a religious treasure—just think of Brother André, who was its first builder. And the Oratory also has ecumenical value and connects with all religions. But it's also a heritage treasure. Every year, 2 million visitors come to Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. What's exceptional about the major project that's under way is the refurbishing of the dome of the basilica. The highest point in Montreal will soon be accessible to everyone. We don't often have the chance in our lives to be able to help build a monument that will endure long after we are gone. Today we've been given this opportunity."

Raymond BACHAND – Strategic Advisor, Norton Rose Fulbright

Pierre Piché added: "This drawing power and the economic benefits that come with it make up one of the reasons that governments have chosen to support the Oratory's major development project."

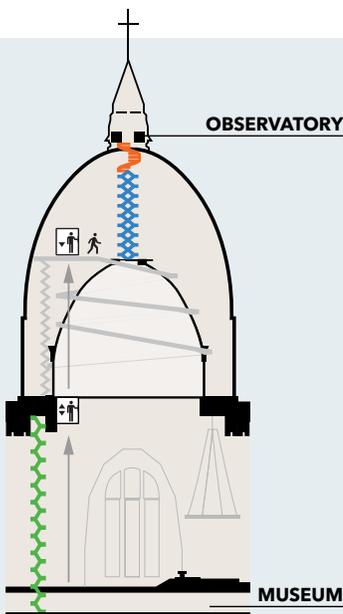
Goal: \$15 million

The major development project has been made possible by grants from the Quebec and federal governments and the City of Montreal, with a total of approximately \$60 million in funding. To round out the necessary funds, the Oratory turned to its Foundation, which launched the *Reaching New Heights* major fundraising campaign, consisting of three phases. The goal of the campaign is to bring in \$15 million, first by calling on religious communities, and then the corporate sector and other foundations. For the final phase, launched last fall, the general public has been asked to pitch in.

“Once this project has been completed, the Oratory will continue to be a living symbol of Montreal for the 21st century and a major attraction known all over the world.”

Results and recognition

Mr. Piché is confident about reaching the current campaign's target. Will that happen in 2020? "We really hope so!" he replied, adding that he's pleased with the results so far [see the chart on top right showing the amounts raised as of March 1st]. "I also want to say that we're very grateful to the religious communities that responded so enthusiastically in supporting the fundraising campaign," he noted. "They saw the Oratory as an extension of the work they do."



REACHING NEW HEIGHTS, ONE STEP AT A TIME!

Purchase a step leading to the dome's summit and help make the major development project a reality.

- More than half of the steps have already been purchased by our donors.
- This offer is now available to the general public!
- Your donation can be spread over five years.

 **\$25,000 STEPS**
The highest steps leading to the observatory

 **\$5,000 STEPS**
Between the oculus and the highest steps

 **\$2,500 STEPS**
Between the Museum and the observation gallery



Thank you!

\$888,353

Contribution from the general public
\$1M campaign in progress



Contribution of religious communities
and corporations

The Foundation's Chairman also thanked the individual donors, the corporate sector and the foundations that believed in the importance of making a donation to help make this major development project a reality. "I'd like to thank them for being builders who are continuing the work started by Brother André." Through their contributions, they're helping to maintain and develop this space that offers an unconditional welcome."

A more modern site

Pierre Piché is convinced that updating the site with new eco-friendly and accessible facilities that are more convenient and more inviting will make Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal more accommodating for its visitors. "The value of an unconditional welcome," he insisted, "remains timely and alive in the 21st century. We still need it, perhaps now more than ever." Its value is priceless, like a precious jewel.

Nathalie Dumas

For more information:

Sébastien Côté, Director
Project Development Funding
514 733-8216, ext. 3131
sebastiencote@osj.qc.ca

Be part of the Oratory's history!

COVID-19 EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES

**Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal
has cancelled all Masses and other activities
on March 12, and it is closed
until further notice.**

This decision, not taken lightly, by the shrine's administration is in addition to the other extraordinary measures put forth by the Quebec government to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 disease.

We cannot confirm that our activities and events of the following weeks will be held.

Visit regularly the website of Saint Joseph's Oratory, www.saint-joseph.org and follow its Facebook pages to discover some inspirational ideas during this time of social distancing.

**Subscribe to our email newsletter
to remain well-informed!**

NOTICE

We are looking for your story

The Museum of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is currently producing a virtual exhibit called "Stories from the Oratory".

This project will tell the story of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal through those who frequent it.

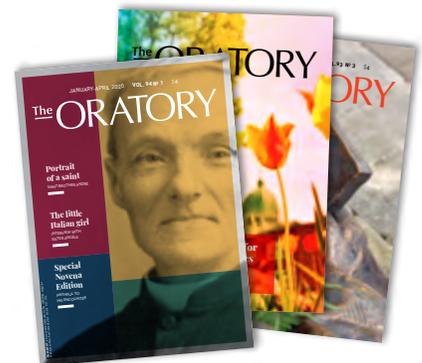
We are looking for testimonials on the Oratory from pilgrims, tourists or visitors. Those selected will be filmed in a short interview which will be presented in the exhibit.

This project benefits from the financial support of Canadian Heritage under the Virtual Exhibits Investment Program.

Please contact us at:
histoiresoratoire@osj.qc.ca

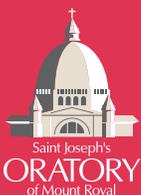
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