

# The pastoral commitment of Saint Joseph's Oratory

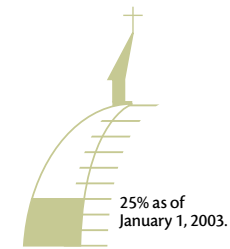
The team at Saint Joseph's Oratory is eagerly preparing a renovation project to improve the services supporting its pastoral mission.

All his life, Brother André welcomed those who came to him. He listened to their hopes and sorrows. He talked about Jesus, of His word, of His life, of His suffering. He introduced them to Joseph who knew how to lead to his Son, those who sought Him out.

Two million people each year come to the Oratory, the world's largest sanctuary dedicated to Saint Joseph. More than two thirds are from outside of Montreal, these pilgrims are expressing their faith. Others come from all over the world to discover a high place of meeting and spiritual experience. These persons must feel a presence that meets their expectations.

The pastoral mission of the Oratory is one of evangelization:

- help pilgrims create a link between the Gospel and their lives
- develop a thirst for Jesus-Christ in everyone
- let His message of love be heard.



2002-2005 Goal:  
**\$45 million**

## A patrimonial gem

Enhancing the value of the religious legacy encourages spiritual life and connects with people's quest for meaning. Art and beauty are paths to God. The museum of the Oratory, the sculptures, the paintings, the stained glass windows and the concerts are all ways of touching the pilgrim's heart and have them discover a reflection of the greatness of God's love.

"The pilgrim finds in this sacred space, a place to confide his sorrows and aspirations to someone who in their eyes is able to listen and to display compassion and has the power of possibly intervening on the outcome of things."

— Jean-Marc Charron<sup>1</sup>

## An invitation to associate yourself with the Grand Project

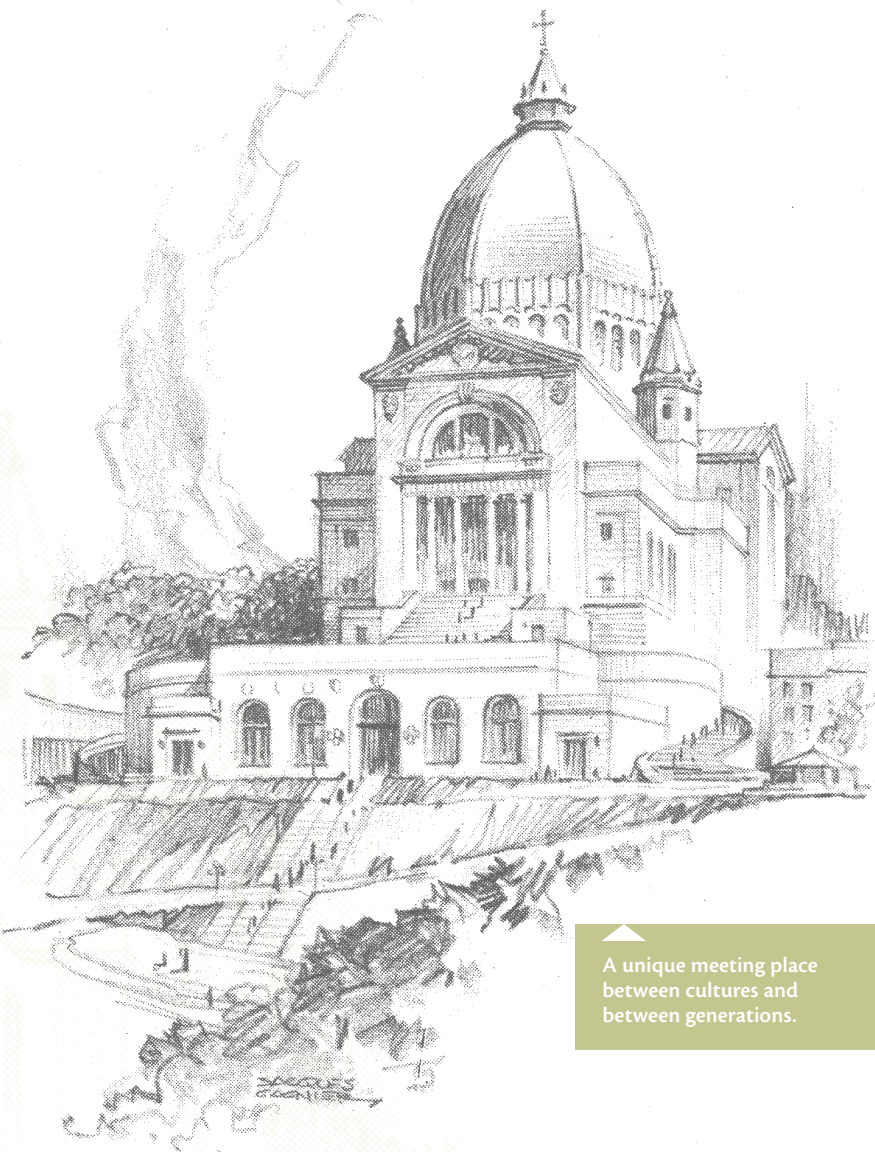
The renovation project of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is an act of faith in the future of the Church. It is an act of evangelization, of faith education and of pastoral presence for the faithful seeking their way.

The Oratory is counting on everybody to help improve and develop the pastoral services offered at the Oratory:

- Improving welcoming services and consultations
- Improving services to ethnic and cultural groups
- Increasing services to young people and to families
- Setting up adequate services for people with reduced mobility
- Creating a place more conducive to experiencing faith.

To meet the expectations and the needs of the pilgrims, the faithful and the visitors we must succeed in this project. ■

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Marc Charron, Un pèlerinage dans la ville: L'Oratoire Saint-Joseph du Mont-Royal, *Prêtre et Pasteur* Magazine, September 1996.



A unique meeting place between cultures and between generations.

## The services of an international sanctuary

Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is a missionary project entrusted to the Congregation of Holy Cross. The team at the Oratory offers pastoral services with the needs of a multiethnic and multilingual clientele in mind. One comes to the Oratory alone, with the family or in groups.

For some, the spiritual journey encompasses the Eucharist, Confession, the Way of the Cross or a suggested spiritual path. For others, this journey comprises participation in a reflection group, spiritual accompaniment, sessions of marriage preparation (720 people a year), activities for renewing with Church practice or celebration of Vespers led by a group of young people.

The Oratory also offers adapted services for the handicapped or for those with reduced mobility. A monthly spiritual meeting is offered and a mass is celebrated on Wednesday at 2 p.m. Pastoral services are plentiful and available 7 days a week, 16 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PILGRIMS

### Ages of visitors at Saint Joseph's Oratory

24,2% between 18 and 35

22,9% between 36 and 50

27,9% between 51 and 65

25% more than 66

a little more than 60% are women.

Survey by the University of Montréal, 1999

"When in most of our western societies, religious practice is on the decline... the practice of popular religions is gaining renewed interest or at least a renewed fervor that cannot be denied."

— Jean-Marc Charron<sup>1</sup>

## The Oratory at the heart of the city

The team at the Oratory is particularly sensitive to the cultural and demographic changes in Montreal, in Québec and in Canada. Despite that in the last two decades religious practice has declined, at the Oratory, during this same period of time, religious practice has increased and the attendance at religious services has been maintained.

Often we believe that only an elderly population visits pilgrimage sites. According to a survey done at the Oratory by the University of Montreal in 1999, it is interesting to note that the Oratory is one of those rare religious sites where all generations meet (see chart on the demographics of pilgrims). Every year, the Oratory welcomes more than 10,000 young

## A grand project for the Church

The spirituality of Saint Joseph's Oratory is profoundly imbedded in tradition inherited from its founder, Blessed Brother André. Man of prayer and of compassion, he listened to his visitors and asked them to put all their faith in Saint Joseph. By choosing Saint Joseph as a guide, Brother André favored a life of silence, of presence, of prayer and devotion. Even today, devotion to Saint Joseph, to the Holy Family and to the Passion of Christ remains pastoral interventions privileged by the team of the sanctuary.

Prayer, liturgical celebrations, accompaniments, demonstrations of faith, religious art and meditation are all ways of getting in touch with the mystery of God.

Evangelization and faith education remain at the heart of the pastoral commitment of the team at the Oratory. The spiritual experience of Brother André is proposed as a model of a life of faith for all Christians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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# General consensus over a great project

After a year's work, a team of professionals at the Oratory, supervised by Mr. Jacques Reeves, architect, presented a renovation project that rallied general consensus and has now been approved by executive and decisional committees at different government levels.

In May, the whole project will be officially presented to the general public through the *Office de consultation publique de Montréal*.

Some of the major work is scheduled to begin this summer.

While the transformation and construction will be going on, the sanctuary will remain open as usual and pastoral services will always be available from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. every day. Please bear with us for the inconvenience during that time and accept our gratitude for your understanding. ■

## RENOVATION PLAN

### 1. Sacred Axis

- Eliminate crossing of roadways and pedestrian walkways
- Widening of main central walkway and staircases and improved landscaping

### 3. Pilgrims' Pavilion

- Building of a new Pilgrims' Pavilion with wheelchair access, providing meeting rooms, cafeteria, souvenir shop, offices for the Pastoral Services and administration
- Relocation of the Carillon on the terrace

### 4. Welcome Centre

- Building of a Welcome Centre providing information services, reservations, meeting and exhibition halls
- Escalators and elevators (for people with reduced mobility, wheelchairs and strollers) will link the Welcome Centre located at the parking level with the Pilgrims' Pavilion at the Plateau level

### 5. Carillon

- Relocation of the Carillon for better acoustics
- New landscaping to improve acoustics

### 6. Traffic

- Safer access to the site and new side-road access for all service vehicles
- Eliminate crossing of roadways and pedestrian walkways

### 7. Research Centre and Library

- Relocation of the Research Centre and Library for easier public access
- Present library to become a small worship and prayer area

### 8. Domes and skylight

- Access to the skylight and space between the inner and outer domes

### 9. Main entrance and traffic lights

#### Landscaping

- Creation of new areas for rest and meditation
- Creation of new forested areas, green spaces and flowerbeds



2002

### 2. Plateau

- At the Crypt level, construction of a flat area easing access to the sanctuary and outdoor ceremonies
- Creation of the Holy Family Place on this plateau
- No more parking of cars and buses in front of the Pilgrims' Pavilion and Holy Cross Pavilion



2005