



# Dialogue

Newsletter of the Fabrique de la paroisse Notre-Dame de Montréal

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*We all have a role to play in protecting our funerary heritage.*

## **The theft of commemorative objects is a concern for all administrators**

### HISTORY

In past years, several Quebec cemeteries have been vandalized and the number of thefts has increased, thereby depriving families of a rich heritage of works of art, sculptures and monuments. Consequently, our institution would like to present the action plan that it has implemented.

### A WORD ON THE LEGAL ASPECTS

The Notre-Dame-Neiges Cemetery is a parish cemetery governed by the Act respecting fabriques, a hybrid act with civil and ecclesiastic repercussions.

Individuals to whom the cemetery concedes lots are authorized to use them as burial sites and are responsible for the upkeep of the markers erected thereupon. At the term of the concession, the Fabrique reserves the right to remove grave markers and dispose of them as it sees fit.

The mission of any Roman Catholic cemetery is to preserve human remains in the respect and dignity of the rites of Roman Catholicism. A parish community can therefore not be held financially responsible for the preservation of commemorative markers erected for the sole benefit of a lot's concession holder, regardless of their artistic, historical or cultural value.



All concession holders may add or remove commemorative works to or from their monument, once they have obtained the Cemetery's approval to do so. The Cemetery's management thereby wishes to preserve the site's specific character. In this respect, we have no information on the value of these works, and the concession holder is the sole individual capable of deciding how much he is ready to invest.

May we remind you that the concession holder is responsible for the upkeep and repair of his monument to ensure that it does not pose a risk to public safety.

As administrators, we must act in the best interests of our community. Concession holders, their successors or assignees remain solely responsible for their grave markers.

### Procedures

To increase awareness of the heritage value of our cemetery's works of art, we began taking inventory of our monuments and works of art in 1998. Since then, several sections have been inventoried: each monument is photographed and a brief description of each is drafted and will be completed at a later stage.

This project is headed by historian and architect Pierre Richard Bisson who will pursue his work

over the coming years until the inventory process has been completed.

In 2002, in collaboration with the Écomusée de l’Au-delà, a monitoring and assessment manual was produced to inventory all bronze statues. The personnel uses this manual to quickly and periodically check up on the works. It has taken on the form of a photo album along with a key plan. Each monument’s name, artist, etc. have also been noted.

In parallel to this inventory taking, we

**Thanks to all our readers  
who contribute comments  
and suggestions.  
Please keep writing.**

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and foremost in the minds  
of all those who visit the  
cemetery.**

implemented more rigorous security measures.

Furthermore, we have repeatedly met with police officials who have subsequently increased their prevention activities throughout the cemetery.

### Prevention

Prevention must be first and foremost in the minds of all those who visit the cemetery. Indeed, if you notice odd situations or actions around the site, do not hesitate to inform one of our

have increased awareness among our personnel—to enable them to identify works having a heritage value—and have

employees at the customer service desk of the administration building of such.

You may also quickly inform our employees travelling throughout the cemetery aboard its official vehicles.

If you notice work being carried out on a monument but are not sure that it has been authorized, please immediately advise one of our employees of such.

### Conclusion

We therefore count on the joint implication of concession holders, visitors and employees to prevent all acts of theft. ♦

**Yolande Tremblay**, General Manager

## Hats off!

These lines express our deep gratitude to all members of the various teams who, day after day, stride the halls of the Centre Le Royer, and particularly to the people who work in Unit 1. You must surely feel a sense of duty well done at the end of each intensely busy day. But for those of us who entrust the task of attending, night and day, to the needs of our loved ones, your vigilance, your heartfelt integrity, and your generous dedication are much greater than the unceasing care you give them.

They bring completely new meaning to the word “work.”

For a little over two years, as we visited our mother, we had the privilege of sharing a few moments of your day, and observing the interest, the attachment, the kindness, and the respect that you accorded to each resident.

Our indelible memories of you serve to remind us that our mother, in the twilight of her life, was fortunate enough to receive from each of you in turn the first smiling “good morning” of her day and a reassuring “good night” before she slept.

During those two last years, we are convinced that, through contact with you, she was sure she was living in the angels’ antechamber. ☺

*The daughters of Aline Prévost*

By Johanne de Montigny, psychologist, McGill University Health Centre, Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal

## Why am I afraid of solitude when in mourning?

Society mistakenly views solitude as a defect. Our tributes to love take place in the context of our consecration of love between couples. Before it is ever expressed, however, love is an emotion, something that is experienced within. This energy is also referred to as the libido, and is present in all those who desire love. The manner in which this love, or this capacity to love, manifests itself differs from one individual to another. Abbé Pierre and Mother Theresa are archetypes, and a million other nameless people symbolize love in their environments: the parent, the professor, the volunteer, the writer, the caregiver, the painter, the singer, the child, the friend...they are all bearers of love, with an infinite variety of ways of giving and expressing their love. Love and solitude is also an inseparable couple. André Comte-Sponville (in *L'Amour, la solitude*, published by Albin Michel, Paris, 2000) expresses it in the following manner: "Love is not the opposite of solitude: it is solitude shared, lived in and illuminated—and sometimes darkened—by the solitude of the other."

Solitude encourages knowledge of the self, creativity and sensitivity to others. It is powerful and requires reflection, contemplation, silence and inner peace. Solitude is frightening because it first appears like a stranger to the self, an intrusion, and is easily confused with nostalgia, melancholy and isolation. This is especially true

during a period of grieving, about which I will say more later.

First, we should mention the influence of modernity, centred on the individual, which has led us to errors of interpretation, to the point that isolation has been considered a ruse or a necessary liberty, while solitude is seen as a lack or an effect of personal alienation.

**Death causes the absence of the loved one, but it can never undo one's ability to love.**



Solitude is, however, an essential human condition, and a preparation for a loving encounter. "In a human life, isolation is an exception. Solitude is the rule... What you experience with your best friend is something you go through alone: your friend is experiencing something else." (André Comte-Sponville)

All those who grieve have the ultimate experience of solitude; they have accompanied the dying person, and have returned to the living world without the Other. This inevitably leads to an extreme solitude where the person's new way of living, of experiencing the beauty of the surroundings, requires a new way of loving. Losing a love is not synonymous with losing love itself; it is the loss of a significant other, not the loss of one's capacity to love. Death does not have such power. Death causes the absence of the loved one, but it can never undo one's ability to love. Grief can inhibit one's personal availability for an indefinite period of time, but love gently urges the heart to open—not quickly, but at each individual's rhythm. Solitude is not to be feared. It should be blessed, because it is offered as a gift to be developed in the company of the other. To tame solitude, and to grasp its essence, come and hear Jules Bureau, author of a wonderful book entitled *Le goût de la solitude* (published by Méridien, Montreal, 1997). ♦

## The Catholic Cemetery: A Testimonial to Christian Faith



In an era when, often enough, traditional values are under attack in our homelands, it is not surprising that our contemporaries abandon family and religious traditions, particularly those related to the rituals of death, funerals, and interment.

When I was young, all this was done in my family, and always in the same way. Whether at home or in the hospital, the dying person received the last rites (confession, anointing of the sick and the viaticum [Eucharist]). Afterward, he was laid out in the parlour for two or three days. Following this, the funeral took place at the parish church at about nine in the morning.

After mass, we made our way to the cemetery for the interment. Finally, everyone went home

except for the immediate family, who gathered at their house. The rest of the year, family members would go to the cemetery to pray, particularly on Mother's Day, on Father's Day, and then on All Souls Day, November 2. On such occasions, we brought flowers, which we placed at the foot of the monument, reciting a dozen rosaries.

The cemetery is still a place of commemoration and, in particular, testimony. Many perpetuate this custom. A deceased Christian interred in a Catholic cemetery continues to testify to his Christian faith. He does this not only for the friends and family who come to pray at his tomb as a gesture of spiritual solidarity (the communion of saints), but also for all those who visit that same cemetery.

In requesting this kind of burial, he reminds his loved ones of his faith in the death and resurrection of his Saviour. Thus, he helps each of us to live with Christian faith in the hope of a life of endless happiness, overflowing with love toward God, Father of us all.

Dear friends, let us continue in Christian faith to bear witness to the life without end to which we all aspire. ♦

*Msgr. Yvon Bigras, p.s.s., C.S.S.*  
Priest of Notre-Dame Basilica of Montreal

### *Humorous Rubric... Childhood Memories*

Close your eyes...and go back in time...

Before the Internet or Mac, before semi-automatics or crack.

Before Sega or Super-Nintendo.

Go back even farther...

I'm talking about playing hide-and-peek at nightfall. The bogeyman and dodgeball.

Spending Saturday mornings watching cartoons,

When the corner of the block seemed as far away as the moon,

And going downtown was really going somewhere.

Walking to school, no matter what the weather,

When water balloons were the ultimate weapons.

When cards between the spokes turned bikes into motorcycles.

When twenty-five cents was a reasonable allowance.

When almost everyone's mother was at home before her kids were.

When girls didn't go out with boys or kiss them before the end of high school, or even later.

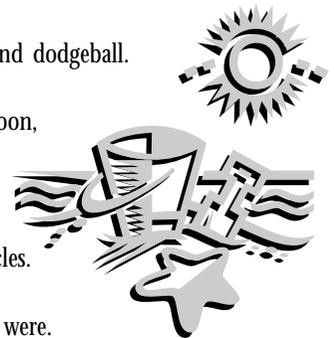
When decisions were made by saying "eeny-meeny-miney-mo."

When financial problems were solved by the banker in a game of Monopoly.

When the most serious thing you could catch from a member of the opposite sex was a cold sore.

When possession of a weapon at school meant being caught with a slingshot.

If you can remember all, or almost all, of these things, then you have REALLY LIVED!



by Joseph Berchoud, *Pompes Funèbres Générales, France*

## I came to tell you that I am leaving

I do not know why..  
But in my secret solitude, I have cast my eye over a lifetime.  
I rested a long while behind a desk at school,  
Seeing my good teacher.  
He was reciting a fable by Jean de La Fontaine.  
It still echoes deep within my being.  
“The labourer and his children...”  
A wealthy labourer, feeling death approach,  
Summons his children, and speaks with them alone.  
This man of the land called his people together, saying:  
“I want to tell you that I’m leaving.”  
I also know that I am leaving.  
It’s odd, but sorrow is not all I feel.  
Much more, for in the book of life, not all is easily deciphered  
and relived!

I read your challenge to you, as well..  
Rediscover pages, and some belong to both of us.  
But I still hear our shared joy dancing.  
Perhaps I will hear still more joy,  
Other songs, confidences...  
Tonight, tomorrow, later...  
You, as well.  
As long as there are memories to share,  
I will not be dead.  
If your body gives you tears...  
Welcome them, and do not hide them.  
Let them be tears of emotion  
And perhaps tears of hope.  
But, if it can be so, not tears of sorrow.

*Anonymous*



## A giant bridge

The shadows were before my eyes. The river  
That has no shore or bed  
Lay there, bleak, immense; and nothing stirred.  
I felt lost in the infinite silence.  
In the depths, beyond the shadow, impenetrable veil,  
God appeared like a sombre star.  
I cried, “My soul, oh my soul!” To cross  
This chasm, which shows no shore,  
To walk to join your God across such darkness,  
A bridge, gigantic on a million arches, must be built.  
Who could ever do it? No one! O grief! Terror!  
Tears! – A white form appeared before me  
As I cast a frightened eye upon the shadows,  
A ghost shaped like a tear;  
A virgin’s face it had, with a child’s hands:  
Like a lily armed by whiteness;  
Its hands, clasped, created light.  
It showed me the chasm to which all dust goes,  
So deep that it returns no echoes;  
And says, “I will build the bridge, if you desire.”  
I lifted my eyes to this pale stranger.  
“What is your name?” I ask. He tells me: “Prayer.”

*Victor Hugo*

## I believe in Woman

I believe in woman,  
Because one day, her eyes opened,  
Because one day later, she opened her lips,  
Because one day her throat knew to scream,  
Because one day, at last, she began to love.  
I believe in woman,  
Because she knows how to die  
And that all deaths are more than a forgetting  
Shape more than a memory  
I believe in her because she closes her eyes  
To know light  
Because she is spirit defying time and space  
Because she is encounter  
And because, always, she is where love resides.

*François Chaignau*

## Waiting ... for the sweet smell of spring

At the cemetery, spring is the year's most beautiful season. Slowly, as the buds begin to emerge, the staff will work feverishly to complete last fall's unfinished work. We are getting ready to welcome thousands of visitors, who will appear along with the first rays of sunshine that will shyly warm the earth, waking it from its cold hibernation. Then daily activities will follow their course once more.



Spring also brings with it major holidays. Easter, the day of Christ's resurrection, is first, and many people will come to reflect on the tombs of loved ones, particularly those who have suffered a recent loss: the first winter is always the hardest. On Mother's Day and Father's Day, children and grandchildren will have their turn to honour the memory of loved ones gone. Weather permitting, the grounds will gain a look of spring as they are decorated with the most beautiful flowers and colours in memory of those who were so gifted at sharing and nurturing our lives. The events will, of course, be marked with religious celebrations at Chapel of the Resurrection, for the cemetery never fails to accord these holidays the respect they are due in keeping with its mission as a Catholic cemetery.

Last year, we mentioned that several new projects were underway, including the "La Chandeleur" cremation garden, a section reserved for cinerary urns. A garden needs flowers, of course, so our horticulturists will make sure that this section lives up to its name.

"Since ancient times, the Everlasting has been known as an eternal flower."

The Everlasting is a magnificent perennial of varied colours, and our new traditional burial section (coffins) is

named after it: "Les Immortelles," or "Everlasting."

An analogy between the unending love given to a person, an immortal soul welcomed into Heaven by God, and this flower, called "Everlasting"... Almost an eternity... yet even when we have turned to dust, their memory will remain in our hearts, forever.

Nearly eight hundred 30-foot lots (for two coffins) and 60-foot lots (for four coffins) will have been created when the project is complete.

Beginning in May, a potted Everlasting will be given to each family that comes for a burial. We hope to see a multitude of them blooming throughout the cemetery all summer, to the delight of concession holders and visitors.

### What are the meditation chapels?

Since we are a Christian, Catholic cemetery, we want to provide grieving families with a meaningful, respectful celebration in a sacred place; this is the essence of our mission. The chapels, built in



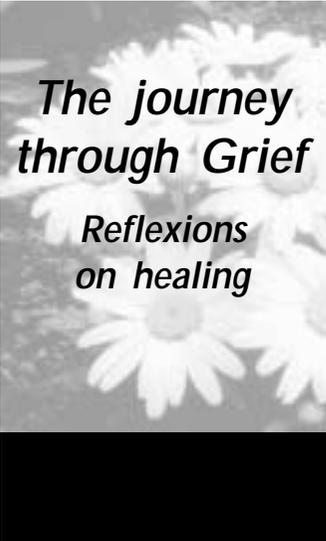
1977, are located near the administration building. They have been completely restored, and decorated to fill a growing need, that is, the option for clients to have the entire funeral at one site.

### The chapels' new vocation.

They are an ideal place for receiving family members who have come to offer their respect and condolences. The decor is that of a private chapel and soft, suitable music creates a serene and calming atmosphere; there can also be a Liturgy of the Word, tes-

*See page 7 >*





## The journey through Grief

Reflexions  
on healing

Over time, this pain softens and  
points the way toward healing.  
As I surrender to the struggle, I become  
more clear about my pathway. I must  
bow to the pain and open my heart.  
The only way to the other side is to  
transcend my intellect and keep my heart open wide.

Be like the bird  
That, pausing in her flight  
Awhile on boughs too slight,  
Feels them give way  
Beneath her and yet sings,  
Knowing that she hath wings.

*Victor Hugo*

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### A GARDEN of memories

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## Finally...

After a winter that was, as usual, too long, with nature sleeping, the moment of spring's awakening at last draws near. Soon, the trees will emerge from slumber, and tulips will remind us of their resplendent colours. Gardeners become impatient and can think of only one thing: planting flowers once again.

If you are planning to plant annuals, here are a few important tips. Select appropriate plants, respecting each plant's needs for sunlight. Then, make sure that the soil is prepared properly. It is very important to spade the ground to a depth of 25 to 30 cm, and add plenty of organic material.



Choose plants with a well-developed root system. It is not necessary to acquire plants that are already bearing lots of blooms. It has been shown that annuals planted when they have only a few flowers but many buds react better, and bloom more during their season.

Choose sturdy, healthy plants. Adding soluble 10-52-10 fertilizer at planting is also recommended. Do not plant too deeply: match the plants' level in their original container. Make sure plants have been watered before they are transplanted. Annuals react better to warm soil, so it is a good idea to avoid planting them too early in the season. May 20 is the date normally set for starting to plant annuals.

Weeding and regular maintenance throughout the growing season will provide you with a glorious flowerbed.

Have a wonderful season!

**Yvon Pagé**

Superintendent, Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Greenhouses

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*From page 6*

timonials, moments of reflection and prayer, as the family wishes.

Families can easily walk from the meditation chapels to the more spacious Chapel of the Resurrection to attend a ceremony before proceeding to the lot for burial, where the deacon will perform the final ritual of parting.

The chapels have three distinct names: Annonciation, Esprit Saint, and Visitation.

Why is it so advantageous to have our cemetery handle all funeral arrangements?

Firstly, we offer several methods of burial, including traditional coffin burial in lots of different sizes, depending on the family's wishes, placement in a crypt in one of our eight mausoleums, along with a choice of over two-thousand interior and exterior niches for cinerary urns. Our chapels can bring families together, offering them personalized, private funeral services, funerals that reflect the loved one, and respect the family. Lastly, we can accommodate any budget. ♦

**Johanne Duchesne**

Director, Marketing

## Numerous Artists

Notre-Dame Basilica is the work of many renowned artists who contributed, over the years, to creating its majestic design. Allow us to introduce a few of them.

The plans for the church and the supervision of its construction were the work of James O'Donnell. Born in Dublin, Ireland in 1774, he studied architecture in Europe before emigrating to New York in 1812. In the United States, he established a solid reputation based on various public and private constructions, including two churches. He died on January 28, 1830, a few months after work was completed. His final resting place is beneath the church.

The grandeur of the interior design, completed at the end of the 19th century, is the work of Victor Bourgeau, one of the most renowned architects of his time. Born in Lavaltrie in 1809, he spent his childhood on construction sites in the region, beside his father and his uncle. We know little about his training. His many achievements include, notably, the St-Pierre-Apôtre Church (1851-53), the Trois-Rivières Cathedral (1858), the plans for the Montreal Cathedral (1870-78), the Mother House of Montreal's Grey Nuns (1869-71) and the monumental gateway to the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery, as well the adjoining houses (1887-88), which were partially modified in 1926. For Notre-Dame's décor, he was instructed to look



to the Sainte Chapelle in Paris for inspiration. He died in Montreal on March 1, 1888, at the age of 78.

Over the years, many sculptors and painters have been called upon to decorate Notre-Dame. They were selected for their artistic talent, as well as for their religious sensibility. Charles Daudelin was chosen to create the new altarpiece for the Notre-Dame Chapel of the Sacred Heart, following the fire of 1978. Born in Granby in 1920, he moved in 1939 to Montreal, where he developed his talent as a sculptor. Daudelin is famous for an impressive series of puppets that he created with his wife Louise, for *Embâcle*, a sculpture-fountain located in the Place du Québec in Paris; for *Éoliennes*, at the corner of St. Urbain and St. Antoine streets; and for numerous other public works of art. He was considered a pioneer in this field. His funeral took place at the Chapel of the Sacred Heart on April 7, 2001, in front of one of his greatest works, an immense bronze altarpiece weighing 20 tons and rising to the height of a five-story building. It represents humanity's progress along life's difficult journey.

We invite you to come discover these works of art, their creators, and many others.

### **Mireille Desrochers**

Adjointe à la planification touristique

The guides at Notre Dame Basilica invite you to come and discover these works, and their artists. They offer daily twenty-minute tours, in French and English. With a reservation, we schedule group tours at a time convenient to you. For people who want to learn more, two-hour conference tours are available. Please contact us at (514) 842-2925



### Upcoming events at Notre-Dame of Montréal Basilica

Salon des vacances et loisirs from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of April in Montréal and in Québec city from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of April • Salon Expo nature in Chicoutimi from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of April • Salon Expo nature in Rimouski from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of April • Salon des Aînés in Québec from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May.



### *Monthly Masses*

Monthly masses will be held Saturdays, on April 5, May 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 7, 2003.

They will be celebrated at the Chapelle de la Résurrection at 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

*For Mother's Day, Commemorative mass on May 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am, at the Chapelle de la Résurrection.*

*For Father's Day, Commemorative mass on June 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am, at the Chapelle de la Résurrection.*

FREE PARKING