



NOTRE-DAME-DES-NEIGES
CEMETERY

Where life is a garden of memories

Dialogue

Notre-Dame-Des-Neiges Cemetery Newsletter

Vol. 3 No. 11 March 2002

And then there was light

The sound and light show “And then there was light” at Montreal’s Notre Dame Basilica has enchanted spectators every evening since October 9. Although most of those who have seen the show were from the Montreal region, visitors were also introduced to the Basilica through this high-tech production.

We have welcomed people from around the world: United States, France, England, Mexico, the Sudan, the Philippines, and Bangladesh, among others. Comments afterward overflowed with praise: *It was magical! An unforgettable experience! A real technological achievement!*

“And then there was light” looks at the history of Mon-

tre through that of the Basilica, relating the major stages in the church’s construction while emphasizing its historical value and works of art. The work of 150 artists and artisans, “And then there was light” uses leading-edge digital technology and complex mechanics. The light show is completely automated, and the images, shot in high-definition video, are stored on a server designed for this technology. Wireless headphones allow listeners to hear the show in English or French.

“And then there was light” is presented Tuesday to Thursday at 6:30 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays at 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. Ticket prices (tax included) are \$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors aged 60 and over, and \$5 for children aged 7 to 17.



“And then there was light” looks at the history of Montreal through that of the Basilica, relating the major stages in the church’s construction while emphasizing its historical value and works of art.

For more information, or to buy tickets, you may call the Basilica at (514) 842-2925, or 1-866-842-2925. Or you can visit the cathedral boutique located at 110 Notre Dame West (to the right of the main church doors). Or call the Admission ticket outlet at (514) 790-1245.

Come and be enchanted by the show, and become ambassadors for this unique spectacle. ♦

Josée Benoit

Director of touristic events



In upcoming “Dialogues,” it will be our pleasure to introduce a series of articles about development plans for our cemetery. Drawn up in 1995 at the request of the City of Montréal, our Master Plan is the result of the work of a multidisciplinary team of specialists in architecture, history, urban development, landscaping, space organization, anthropology, geology, and grief psychology. These experts focused on all aspects of activity in our cemetery; the historical, cultural, natural, mineral, heritage, and funerary dimensions were thus analyzed in depth.

From this massive study, and from many discussions with municipal authorities and citizens groups concerned with Mount Royal, a planning document was developed which is over 400 pages long. This document will guide the management of the cemetery over the coming years. It is the Master Development Plan, to which citizens will be asked to respond in the next few months.

Yoland Tremblay, General Manager



CENTRE FUNÉRAIRE
CÔTE-DES-NEIGES

The Côte des Neiges funeral centre... a place of reflection, help, and support

Usually, it is when we lose a loved one that we think about death. Around us, the pulsating rhythm of life keeps these moments of reflection at a distance. This is why we are so helpless when a loved one dies. We are ill-equipped, we don't know how to grapple with this challenge, and everything seems arduous.

Aware of the current context and the difficulties experienced, those in charge of the Côte-des-Neiges funeral centre have deliberately emphasized a variety of elements while pursuing a single goal:

to provide a comforting and serene location, and a multiplicity of services, from reception to support and information, to help people deal with death and mourning.

Many people are surprised by the welcoming, comforting, and serene atmosphere when they first visit us. Everything converges to offer a restful and warm décor: colours, artwork, comfortable rooms, etc.



Over and above its architecture and design, the Côte-des-Neiges funeral centre has emphasized an array of non-traditional services that are very much in keeping with the goal of providing support:

- Conferences
- Celebrations
- Concerts
- Connections with support groups
- Information sessions on various subjects: taxes, estates, etc.
- Reference library, etc.

In short, the Cote des Neiges funeral centre is a modern, current, and very human funeral home which cares about people's well-being. ♦

Robert Leblanc

Director, Côte-des-Neiges Funeral Centre

Integrating mourning with life

In the first few weeks following the death of a loved one, the tasks and transactions associated with the estate occupy much of the mourner's mind; thus, the burden of these responsibilities masks the psychological reactions inherent in his or her loss. Reflexes are "anesthetized," unconsciously postponed. At the same time, the benevolent attentiveness of those close to him

touch with his life, his darkness. He dreads the routine activities that are at the heart of a life in total upheaval. For the one who is left behind, the theme of death is not a theory or a hypothesis, but signifies a great sadness, forming a crater in the centre of his body. The hole gapes, the emptiness is immense.

The cessation of breathing was and remains the only indication of the true death of the loved one. In spite of everything, the mourner continues to doubt and a feeling of unreality triumphs over the permanence of the loss for an undetermined length of time. As everyone who has seen a loved one die knows, the sudden lack of breath chocks the mourner. Hearing this breath be interrupted, break, and resume until it happens for eternity is the scene which forces one to realize that death has occurred, to grasp forever this unique act of dying. The inescapable moment of truth sparks the difficult work of grieving.

Thus, the mourner strives to find his way in spite of personal upheaval. This is a very difficult phase. The author Fernande Goulet Yelle (1) calls it "chaos." Longing, absence, emptiness set in, like a crypt within the survivor. This abyss corresponds to an existential vacuum. Why life? Why love? Why death? An insatiable quest for meaning. The question-

ing is cruel, answers and advice cannot, during this phase, offer any avenue to peace. Chaos leads, for a moment, to an internal drifting; yet discouragement is an obstacle to its unfolding. At this stage, a silent and reassuring presence will provide the one who weeps with some temporary comfort. *"Everything unfolds in the growing awareness of what is happening deep within, and in the accepting the time needed to rebuild one's inner self and allow the tenacious forces of life to emerge."* (Goulet Yelle, p. 9).

The work of mourning is demanding and painful. It unfolds in phases, states, a process and a rhythm whose duration is different for each person. Then chaos finally makes way for a more gentle *"movement"*. Between the loss, the integration of the loss, and the eventual *"healing"*, the interior wasteland saps the desire to live. The crossing of this desert is most often accomplished alone, deprived of old signposts, since the injury is great, and the risk of losing once more is very threatening. Mourners thus withdraw, and those close to them avoid them because they don't know what to say. Malaise leads to isolation. Time, personal resources, the return of hope, all combined with the great sadness caused by the loss initiate the work of redefining the self. The past cannot be reinvented, the future is hard to picture, so the mourner must cling to the present.

Solitude brings a profound shift within the self, enabling contact with a



is withdrawn as family members and friends are forced to get back to their normal activities. Perhaps two or three months later, the shock of the loss reverberates, like the echo of a blow, the emotional support diminishes, and the mourner forces himself to get back in

Ash Wednesday leads to Easter Joy

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. On that day, during mass, we received the ashes: the priest placed ashes on our heads saying, “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

This text is taken from Genesis, Chapter 3, verse 19, after a description of Adam and Eve’s sin in eating of the forbidden fruit. Through this act, human beings themselves created the Natural Law. They had not believed that this privilege belonged only to the Creator of Nature.



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promise that, until now, was foreign. To discover a different self, to love, create a new path, this is now the mourner’s quest. “Repairing” or “personal transformation,” the third and final phase, represents the return of grace, the blessing of living and breathing, of continuing with curiosity, generosity, sensitivity, with empathy for the grief of others. The task is awaited, like the fruit of arduous labour, a gift that the mourner will continue to unwrap, a treasure, an emotional legacy that those lost send to us, a kind of offering that need only be gathered, enlarged, dispensed, shared among survivors.

Those lost have smoothed the path, they have left their footprints, and we can follow them when the time comes. It will then be our turn to raise our hands to the heavens, to grab the kite by the tail, to cease to defy death, to help others rekindle their joie de vivre.

My mother died on October 14, 2001. She has never stopped inspiring me, cheering me on in my quest for life. I inherit her beautiful energy, and I would like to honour her likewise, by continuing it, forever. ♦

(1) Goulet Yelle, Fernande, *L’hibiscus était en fleurs (propos sur le deuil)*, Laliberté, Québec, 1992

“Bodily death is natural, but for faith it is in fact the wages of sin (Rom 6:23).” For those who die in Christ’s grace it is a participation in the death of the Lord, so that they can also share his Resurrection. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1006).

“Death is transformed by Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father’s will. The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing.” (Catechism no. 1009)

Thus, death gains a positive meaning (Ph 1:21). Baptism immersed us in purifying water, which has become a living water. This water symbolizes the Holy Spirit’s descent into us, which fills us with overflowing life: this extends from our present life into eternal life, where all who have loved tenderly gather in the House of the Lord.

The cemetery, this place of “rest” for all of our deceased, testifies to the hope for eternal bliss for all. There is no reincarnation after death. There is only life which calls us to unending joy for those who are want to do God’s will.

Msgr. Yvon Bigras, p.s.s., C.S.S.

Saint Patrick, the Irish holiday



Born in a small Scottish village toward the end of the 4th century, it was Saint Patrick’s difficult mission to evangelize Ireland. His story begins around the age of sixteen, at which time he was kidnapped, probably by Welsh pirates, then sold as a slave in Ireland. Several years later, he ran away, after dreams led him to escape and board a ship for his native land.

A priest, and a disciple of Saint Germanus of Auxerre, who made him a bishop. His mission was to bring Catholicism to Ireland. He returned there, succeeded in converting the reigning king, and in spite of strong opposition, founded many monasteries, built churches and, especially, trained apostles to continue his work.

He founded his see at Armagh, which became the Catholic centre of Ireland in the 5th century.

by *Christian DeCacqueray, Paris*

Burial of Claude Platon - **January, 2002**

In December, 2001, on the Notebook page of a French daily, appeared a long death notice with completely new contents. A series of charitable organizations were sad to announce the "deaths of people they had sheltered or met: the deaths of street people." A list of names and dates followed. Some were listed only with an "X"; others were adorned with a name. The announcement concluded: "Many more remain unknown, both in Paris and outside it. Those who know them should let us know. Their average lifespan was 46 years. National life expectancy: 78 years for men, 82 years for women. A mass will be held in the memory of these street people on...

With this strange announcement, organizations were trying to raise awareness, after death, of lives that had been characterized by wandering, chaos, and exclusion. This parting ritual for the most destitute among us, who are marked by the hardships of their lives even in death, was somewhat unusual, incongruous. Though the death notice did not go unnoticed. Many newspapers used it as an opportunity to discuss the death and funerals of the homeless.

The law stipulates that municipal social service departments must provide a decent grave for any indigent person, on the condition, however, that he or she die within the municipality's territory. Yet, since wandering by definition characterizes the lives of the homeless, these people often die in cities where they are unknown, with the result that no municipal department will agree to take responsibility for their funeral costs. The deceased may sometimes remain in refrigeration for months while the situation is resolved.

It was thus that we were recently called upon regarding the burial of

someone who had died two months earlier, and for whom there was no one willing to handle the interment. My contact, a young priest in the Diocese of Paris, wanted me to help him. He had just learned that Claude, the deceased, would soon be taken to a cemetery to be buried anonymously, along with seven other homeless deceased people.

After some legwork, we arranged for Claude to go to a church in the centre of Paris for a funeral mass. I attended on behalf of the Service Catholique des Funérailles (Catholic funeral service), and I have to say that, in my ten years experience in funeral services, I have never witnessed anything as authentic.

The small group of people who gathered around his coffin, street people, religious, and members of charitable organizations were there to bid goodbye to a man who had been forgotten in death, as in life. The officiating priest took the time necessary for a beautiful celebration. During his homily, he read a letter written by a ten-year-old child who had met Claude in the metro near his house. The child talked of his respect for this man, who though he had no home did not complain about his lot. Claude had given the child words of wisdom for living life well. Now, he was mourning his friend. The truth and simplicity of the message moved us all. Two months after his death, Claude was mourned and loved. Each of us in turn was asked to place a small light on his coffin. Then, in procession, we accompanied him to the hearse, at which time most boarded a mini-bus chartered by one organization to go to the cemetery. Everything needed for a beautiful homage was there: love, prayer, respect, and time. A true bulwark against barbarism, this farewell will remain etched in our memories forever. ♦

QUESTION:

Is your annual "Between Grief and Hope" conference actually open to families and friends? Is it not primarily aimed at care-givers and practitioners?

ANSWER: Is your annual "Between Grief and Hope" conference actually open to families and friends? Is it not primarily aimed at care-givers and practitioners?

The congress is open to all those who are affected by the issue of death and grieving. However, the Sunday morning session is specifically designed to support and inform families, volunteers, and informal caregivers about the impact of loss. Experience shows that all participants register for all activities, for although public opinion or policy may encourage families to keep a sick person at home for as long as possible, even until his or her death, it is important to acknowledge that families are now much smaller than they were, and frequently one significant person will act as the single care-giver for the whole family. The risk of exhaustion is thus enormous, and the questioning that arises from the outcome of events is daunting for anyone who strives to provide care.

The department of health and social services wants to build connections between the hospitals, CLSCs, nursing homes, and patients' homes. This requires collective communication and cooperation, for how else can we help families to care for their loved ones? This is why we believe it is important to throw our conference open to all who are involved in helping relations, by giving them an outstanding opportunity to meet with competent speakers and workshop leaders who want to share their knowledge. This is what gives our gathering its strength, and its originality.

The next conference will be held at the Four Points Hotel in Dorval on September 27, 28, and 29, 2002.

To register, please contact Mrs. Francine McDuff at (514) 735-4590, or by e-mail at fmcduff@cimetierenddn.org.

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

Pre-arrangements... a challenging decision!

When pre-arrangements are discussed, it is always easier to argue against rather than in favour of them. Your children will say: "Why do you want to talk about that! Spend your money on things you enjoy!"

Of course, your children would rather believe that you will live forever and, moreover, they may have not had to experience the loss of a loved one before.

Are you concerned for your family?

Protect them from the difficult task of deciding what kind of funeral would be best, most appropriate, or will satisfy the expectations of family members, relatives, and friends.

There is another reason to think about the issue: the population is aging, and the funeral arrangements market is consequently growing rapidly, which is expressed as constantly rising costs. Over the next ten years, the cost of a funeral will probably double.



Someone who has foresight probably owns life insurance, purchases travel insurance when necessary, and draws up a will at some point in his/her life. Making pre-arrangements is equally essential, and neither pre-arrangements nor life insurance causes a person to die faster.

Our Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery can provide all services at a single location, allowing you to avoid travelling from one location to another while you are dealing with the loss of a loved one. For those who opt for cremation as an

interment method, complete funerals can cost less than \$2,500, including a religious ceremony at our Chapelle de la Résurrection. There is a large selection of burial plots, including various sizes of lots, crypts in all of our eight magnificent mausoleums, interior and exterior columbariums which are highly innovative, including niches that are integrated with sculptures, altars, and gardens. Our counselors are ready to assist you and, if you wish, can visit you at your home. Payment terms for pre-arrangements are very flexible, and bear no interest for a period of up to five years.

To learn more, contact us at (514) 735-1361. The Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery is one of the most precious gems in Montreal's natural, historic, and cultural heritage. ♦

Johanne Duchesne
Director, Marketing

The commemorative pendant

A sweet souvenir... of infinite love.

A commemorative pendant is a wonderful way to preserve the memory of a loved one. It is available in gold or silver, and comes with a small chain.

The pendant is shaped like a cross, a heart, or a medallion. Inside each shape is a small cavity in which a tiny quantity of the loved one's ashes are placed, preserving them forever.



The pendants are on display in our reception room.

"Night arrays itself in an infinity of precious stars, and in the palm of my hand rests a fragment of eternity..."

between the lines

LIBÉRER LA VIE, Le chrétien et le défi de la mort
 ["Freedom for life, Christians and the challenge of death"]
Anselm Grun, O.S.B., Mediaspaul, 2001

This is a lovely reflection on death and resurrection, on the widely divergent opinions on death, reincarnation, heaven, and hell. It is also a summary of what the Bible and contemporary theology have to say on the issue. The author relates, "I'd like to help people banish fear so that they can live their lives more profoundly. For me, death is an invitation to live each moment intensely, to penetrate life's mysteries."

A wonderful read.



POUR UNE MORT SANS PEUR
 ["For death without fear"]

Amaud Desjardins, Editions de la Table Ronde, Paris, 1983

Although illness is the precinct of physicians, death has always been the concern of priests, lamas, and spiritual leaders. But, first and foremost, it is our concern. Century after century, esoteric teachings have declared that man can discover, within his own being, the foundations of his consciousness, the care of the vedanta, Buddhism's non-born, Christianity's eternal life and, through this, rest in the complete absence of fear, and certainty of immortality.

This book is the result of twenty-five years of study of Hindi, Tibetan, Zen Buddhist, and Sufi sages. He offers all his statements to your judgement. We are living beings, and, if we wish, we can discover the ultimate secret of life within ourselves.



A GARDEN
 of memories

A rare visit!

The site of the Notre Dame des Neiges cemetery, one of the largest and most beautiful in North America, can also be considered a large park in which wildlife can live peacefully.

Significant efforts have been made to preserve the natural woods located on the cemetery's grounds in order to attract rare species of birds.

On a beautiful winter morning, an important visitor finally came by the cemetery. A beautiful bird which had not been seen in the area for some time came to see us.

A pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus Pileatus*) decided to dig some holes in our old maples. A fairly rare and protected species, the pileated woodpecker can be up to 19" long, and is about the same size as the American crow. This climbing forest bird boasts black and white



plumage, and displays a magnificent scarlet crest.

It digs holes in old trees to feast on the insects and larvae hiding there. The holes can reach 25 cm high, and 10 cm in

width and depth. Our pileated woodpecker's undulating, staccato flight takes it from the summit of the mountain to the cemetery's wooded plains.

Other species can be observed in the cemetery through the year. We hope that our increasingly ecological approach will draw more species to the Notre Dame des Neiges cemetery.

Yvon Pagé

Superintendent, Notre-Dame-des-Neiges
 Greenhouses (514) 735-1361

**Some employees at Montreal's
 Notre-Dame Basilica**

Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica employs several dozen people as guides and boutique clerks. Under the supervision of the director of tour activities and her assistant, these employees handle very interesting tasks.

The guides, who are highly qualified and trained, are of course primarily responsible for giving guided tours of the Basilica to all types of clientele. The visits, which are primarily designed for tourist clients, last 20 minutes or 2 hours, and provide cultural, religious, architectural, and historical infor-



See page 8 >

GREETING CARDS
(BLANK INSIDE)
AVAILABLE IN
THE FRONT OFFICE

SPRING CARD
"SKYWARD"
BY LAURENT LAFLEUR



ACTIVITIES

Booth at Galeries d'Anjou
from March 4 to 10

Easter – our offices are open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
and a shuttle will be available to take you
to your family plot.

Booth at the Salon des Aînés from April 2 to 6,
at Centre Pierre Charbonneau



Booth at the Salon des Fleurs, plantes et jardins
from April 12 to 14, at Place Bonaventure
Guided cemetery tours on June 9, August 11
and September 8

Commemorative mass on May 12, Mother's Day,
at Chapelle de la Résurrection

Commemorative mass on June 16, Father's Day,
at Chapelle de la Résurrection

Monthly Masses

All masses are held on Saturdays.
They will be held on March 2,
April 6, May 4, 2002.

Celebrations will be held at the Chapelle
de la Résurrection at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.

FREE PARKING

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mation about the Basilica, developed in collaboration with Mgr. Yvon Bigras, priest of the parish, and an enthusiastic teacher. In order to answer the questions that can be asked during a tour, the guides must therefore have detailed knowledge about all the building's components and the works of art it contains.

Along with tourist visits, the guides lead educational tours for second- and third-grade students. The tours are supported by educational documents produced by the assistant tour activity director in collaboration with the guide team.

These employees also welcome spectators for the "And Then There Was Light" show, presented at Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica Tuesday through Thursday at 6:30 p.m., and Friday and Saturday at 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. The exhibit presents the birth of Montreal and the Notre-Dame Basilica through a sound and light show which uses extraordinary multimedia techniques.

In addition to the required historical and cultural knowledge, guides also need a great deal of interpersonal skill and ease in dealing with people to carry out the tasks of informing, educating, and welcoming people. They must constantly be attentive to the needs of visitors while protecting the Basilica's property, and they handle their responsibilities brilliantly.

The boutique clerks are responsible for two points of sale for religious objects and Basilica souvenirs. In addition to

the Notre-Dame Basilica boutique, which is open year-round, a small boutique near the Notre-Dame du Sacré Cœur chapel is open during the tourist season. These employees must have a thorough knowledge of the objects they are handling, as well as an understanding of the religious aspects of the articles for sale in the boutiques. We should add that the employees deal with the public constantly, especially during the tourist season which can bring dozens of clients into the store simultaneously. Employees must be calm, attentive, and polite in spite of the stress created by a rush of clients. We have to say that they handle it very well.

Finally, we must mention the enormous job carried out by the director of tour activities and her assistant. In addition to supervising the employees mentioned above, the director handles purchasing of the objects sold in the boutiques. She also ensures that the "And Then There Was Light" show operates smoothly, and manages the budget allocated to her. She is helped in her work by her assistant who, among other things, creates the guides' work schedule. The director and her assistant do a tremendous job which deserves our appreciation.

The Notre-Dame Basilica is part of Montreal's heritage. We would like to invite you to take a guided tour, or attend the fabulous "And Then There Was Light" sound and light show. ♦