



NOTRE-DAME-DES-NEIGES
CEMETERY

Where life is a garden of memories

Dialogue

Notre-Dame-Des-Neiges Cemetery Newsletter

Vol. 4 No. 12 June 2002

The Cemetery's Master Development Plan: Honour Memory and Protect the Environment

To follow up on our "The Tale of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges," which related our institution's history up until the end of the year 2000, we feel it is important to bring you our vision of the cemetery's future in upcoming issues of our newsletter.

To better understand our philosophy, it is necessary to recall that the Fabrique of the Notre-Dame de Montréal parish owns two exceptional historic sites: the Notre-Dame de Montréal Basilica and the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery. The management policies of the Fabrique take care to respect its overall mission, which is to be a religious institution at the service of the Christian community.

For its part, the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery is a Catholic cemetery that ensures proper burial of the deceased while offering related products and services. As a sacred site, the Cemetery is an extension of the Church and its aim is to commemorate the deceased with respect and dignity. The cemetery's role complements the Church's pastoral function and provides survivors with the comfort they need.

The Cemetery, a non-profit organization that receives no government subsidies, manages its operations with a view to balancing its budget so as to ensure its continued existence and to meet its long-term obligations.



Memorial Space and Green Space

Our Cemetery is one of the most beautiful and precious jewels of Montreal's natural, historic and cultural heritage. Founded in 1854, it belongs to the Fabrique of the Notre-Dame de Montréal parish, which for almost 150 years has carefully guarded this green space of some 340 acres nestled against Mount Royal's flanks. During this time, close to 900,000 people have been interred here.

In addition to being Canada's largest cemetery, it is one of Montreal's largest green spaces. Its design, inspired by the concept of the garden cemetery, provides the site with its unique natural character. Its grounds include no less than 10,000 trees and a multitude of pleasantly disposed floral arrangements.

Our approach to conserving this green space corresponds to that of preserving our historic heritage. In fact, our cemetery harbours the monuments of more than 325 eminent personalities, including Henri Bourassa, Robert Bourassa,

Sir Georges-Étienne Cartier, Jean Drapeau, Jean Gascon, Olivier Guimond, Alfred Laliberté, Calixa Lavallée, Émile Nelligan and Maurice Richard. Notable works of art can also be found here, including the Saint-Claire d'Assise charnel house and mausoleum, built in 1855, and the Resurrection Chapel, built in 1877.

Open to all visitors in search of peace and a place to meditate, our Cemetery has always been a part of the Montreal fabric. Our master plan will allow us not only to protect this peaceful haven but also to integrate it further with the community and its multicultural mosaic.

A unique garden cemetery and a memorial site to be protected

Our master plan was developed in response to a request from the City of Montreal in 1995 and is the fruit of the labour of a multidisciplinary team that included a historian, architects, urban planners, a psychologist, and landscape architects. These professionals, who all possessed extensive experience combined with recognized expertise, made possible an exhaustive analysis of the multiple facets relating to all aspects of our site, including heritage buildings, historic sites,

landscaping, the site's spatial organization, conservation, restoration, etc.

From this immense study, as well as from discussions with municipal authorities and citizen groups interested in policy on Mount Royal, was conceived a planning document of over 400 pages. This will direct the cemetery's management over the course of years to come.

Our master development plan is, for us, a great source of pride, and we are very pleased to be able to share the result of our work with you. ♦



Yolande Tremblay, General Manager

To Celebrate a Life...

In Sophocles's tragedy, the king, Creon, denies Antigone the right to bury her brother, who was condemned to death for committing treason. Secretly, she retrieves his remains and administers the funeral rites to him. For this act, Antigone is sealed alive in her brother's tomb.¹ This play can be interpreted symbolically to show what happens when no ritual occurs to encompass the grief of the bereaved. Survivors remain prisoners of the memories they were unable to share. Funeral rites serve not only to celebrate the life of the person who has departed, but also to help restore the inner peace of those who remain behind. When they are meaningful, these individual and collective gestures restructure and reorganize life for those who must continue on.

Death is the epitome of the radical separation of two people, or of an individual and the group to which he or she belonged. The funeral ceremony serves to put time on hold for those who remain. The gulf opened by the announcement of a death is momentarily held in abeyance by the organization and celebration of the funeral. In the consciousness of survivors, this celebration of memory provides

*“The heart of the departed is a music box.
Barely have we begun to think of them
when out flows a melody, both light and
heartrending.”*

- Christian Bobin, *Ressusciter*

the assurance they need of the more or less long-term survival of the departed.

As well as acting as a balm and a place for memories, funeral rites, experienced collectively, provide support and comfort

for the isolated mourner to rely on. The sharing of grief may perhaps not end the personal suffering of someone facing the tribulation of death, but it can break their isolation. To confront death, head-to-head, without the necessary encompassing structure of personalized rites, is to advance towards an ungraspable phantom.

The death of a loved one exiles us and makes us feel guilty to be alive. The basic function of the funeral ritual is to act as a companion for the individual and the group as they traverse this difficult period. It opens a previously unknown inner space, and allows us to let life carry us forward again. ♦

Annie Dubé, Theologian and Aaron Funerary Consultant

Benoit Chagnon, Thanatologist

1- Monette, Lise, in *Frontières: Revue d'information et de réflexion sur la mort et le deuil*, Université du Québec à Montréal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1991, p. 18.

To Withhold, Request or Offer Forgiveness: A Question of Health for Grieving Individuals.

Forgiveness is a word that, at first glance, evokes religious connotations. Here, however, it will apply to psychology, and can be thought of as a psychological painkiller for those faced with the difficulty of dying or the confusion and distress of remaining alive once the Other has departed.

The following statement is included in an article by Frédéric Lenoir: "Life is viable because someone, even if only once, has looked at us with love." Yet, this look of liberty and goodness is most often offered to us at life's extreme limits; that is, when we arrive in this world, or in the hours which precede our death. What occurs then is an ultimate communion, that which plants the seeds of eternal moments and provides the courage to face great challenges.

Our quest for meaning is at once basic and insatiable, and to better direct and carry out this endless search, relational fluidity is essential. The most wonderful thing would be to use this potential throughout life. Some of us will arrive at this through moments of exaltation or bursts of happiness; others find it difficult to live with growing disillusionment, and lose touch with their natural impulse to love, that powerful tendency coiled in the very depths of our being or our desire to be. Often, previous suffering is the cause, building major obstacles between people of mutual significance. Thus, with time's corrosion, the interior dam shapes a heart of stone, largely unresponsive to the weaknesses and mistakes of others, and this demand for human perfection is usually also applied to the self.

It is a utopian demand. It results in a closing down that leads to a breach of communication, a refusal to forgive, and a barrier great enough to stave off love, friendship, and personal development.

Bradshaw² warns that: "the wounds we refuse to acknowledge and attend to impel us to wound others or ourselves." This is why forgiveness is crucial to mental health. The regrets of the dying and the self-reproaches of survivors strike me increasingly in a world that lacks love, and thirsts for profound human relationships. People have a sense of having failed, even at the moment of death, because they do not feel comfortable or capable of voicing their essential thoughts and hidden desires, of speaking calmly in the face of an eventual, unavoidable separation. This calls forth suffering, the resolution of which, for many, has not been facilitated by the overcoming of resentment.

Have you ever asked for, offered, or

received the forgiveness of a loved one - a person who may have damaged you in the past? Are we capable of offering such forgiveness to ourselves? The only good news about the number of mistakes one commits comes from understanding that those of the Other are equally unavoidable. It is useless to believe that we can be beyond reproach. These human pitfalls lie in wait, attack and prostrate us. This does not prevent us from remaining in touch with what some call the divine within us: that pure element which rises upwards, that marvellous junction between feeling anchored or rooted and desiring the sublime. To turn inwards and to step out of oneself with kindness and indulgence so as to offer an attentive presence to life's wounded—that is the goal of many who aspire to become better for themselves and for others.

One can free oneself from resentment before the end, even if only to leave behind a memory that pacifies, edifies, and gives survivors the desire to confidently go on living despite their great sorrow, thanks to an emotionally-mature attitude towards human, global, and individual fallibility. Achieving this relational goal is not an illusion; it is an opportunity, an extraordinary chance to discover and offer the inner peace that counters the existential turmoil and suffering intimately linked to dying.

Being human implies accepting imperfection in our relations, accepting our wounds, fragility and differences. It also means letting go of certain expectations that, although realistic, are susceptible to failure, while at the same time pre-



The Celtic Cross



Many of our cemetery's monuments incorporate a Celtic cross. This cross stands within a circle, which surrounds the two arms and the vertical pole of the cross. Among the Celts, this cross symbolizes the divine temple occupied at the centre by God. The Christian cross served as the scaffold on which Christ, our Saviour, died. Thus, it symbolizes **death**. The circle that encloses these two pieces of wood symbolizes the presence of God, the creator of **life**. The ideal temple is God in human form, Jesus Christ our Saviour, who died and was resurrected. This Celtic cross demonstrates admirably that which is fundamental to our Christian faith: we believe

that Christ died out of love for us (on Good Friday), and that he was resurrected, having conquered sin and death (on Easter).

This cross, referred to as Celtic, was popularized mainly in Ireland, a country inhabited by the Celts, ancestors of many of the peoples of Western Europe, including France and Britain.

Such a cross is soon to top the steeple of the Notre-Dame-de-la-Résurrection Chapel. However, we can see the cross here and there on many of the cemetery's monuments.

“Lord we adore your cross,
And sing of your holy resurrection :
It is the wood of the cross that has brought
joy to the world.” ♦

(Antiphon of the morning prayer from the breviary for Good Friday)

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

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servicing basic values such as respect or the desire for love and kindness. In contrast, contempt, meanness, envy and sabotage are relational poisons, which can turn against and destroy one.

When seen as irreparable failures, relational ordeals sully the art of living, loving, and letting go. It is urgent to overcome and transcend these before the attachment is undone, in order to strengthen the foundations shaken by the immensity of loss. It is possible to avoid saying, “It is too late.” It is possible to stop wounding oneself with repetitions of “If I had known, if I could have,” and “I ought to have.”

In his book on forgiveness, Jampolsky³ stresses that “research has revealed a relationship between forgiveness and health.” Monbourquette⁴ explains it in the following manner: it is “as if the malice of the aggressor reaches the inner self. We become inclined to imitate our aggressor, as if we had been contaminated with a contagious virus.” In my opinion, the magnitude of our ability to love ensures the possibility of forgiveness.

My colleague, Marie de Hennezel⁵ wagers “that the affective world we live in has reached its limit... The main difficulty experienced by human beings at the hour of death, is that they are waiting for a true gesture of acceptance before they depart... Because contained within the difficulty of dying, is the difficulty of letting go of life when something for which we are searching hasn't been found. Some find it just before dying, when they have good support, but many leave

without having had this primordial experience of acceptance.”

I urge you, readers of Dialogue, to ask yourselves—how can we call upon our human wisdom, our capacity to reflect, to step back, and to gain perspective? How can we release our capacity to say to the other, “I forgive you. From now on, I accept and love you as you are, for what you are, and because you are. Yes; because you are he or she who showed me who I am, and above all, who I want to become.” It is a question of imparting this message to the Other, before their departure: “I love you, and I will continue without you because of everything I have discovered in myself through my relationship, even when difficult, with you.” This prevents the cancer or regret and bitterness from attacking the soul. Forgiveness is a crucial legacy that promotes mental health and the joy of living. ♦

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- 3- Jampolsky, Gerald G.: *Forgiveness: The Greatest Healer of All*, Beyond Words Publishing Inc., Hillsboro, Oregon, 1999.
- 4- Monbourquette, John: *How to Forgive: A Step by Step Guide*, Saint Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2000.
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Daniel Delaveau, formerly in charge of cemeteries for the Ville de Poitiers

History of Poitiers' cemeteries

Before the Revolution of 1789, in Poitiers as in all of France, the cemeteries were built within the walls. At this time, 20,000 people lived in Poitiers, and approximately 800 deaths were recorded each year.

There were 24 parishes, 5 chapters, 11 men's communities, 15 women's communities, and 3 hospices. Each church was endowed with a cemetery, which was adjacent to it and often surrounded it.

Abbeys and convents buried their dead within their precincts, cemeteries were numerous, and there were about forty of them; in Poitiers, these were often small sometimes no larger than a "boissellée," which equalled 7.60 acres.

The large number of cemeteries within the walls would lead local leaders to find other solutions for burying the dead, for sanitary reasons. After the Royal Order of 1776, the Mayor declared that, following the example set by the large cities, it would be desirable to move Poitiers cemeteries outside the city boundaries.

But there was strong opposition.

- Who would carry the coffins if the

cemeteries were outside the walls?

- How could carts be used, when the city had the worst-paved streets in the kingdom?
- How would the Clergy get to the new cemeteries?

Thus, nothing changed until the Revolution. It was only on February 7, 1792 that then-mayor Mr. Creuse Pascal presented a project to place the cemeteries outside the city. Three locations were selected, and the old cemeteries were closed and put up for sale.

The city of Poitiers now has four cemeteries, placed in approximately the same direction and a few hundred metres from the ancient Gallo-Roman cemeteries.

The Hôpital des Champs cemetery

In 1516, Poitiers was ravaged by the plague. To prevent contagion, a hospital was built between 1522 and 1531 on a piece of land offered by then-mayor François Famé, and a cemetery was attached to it.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the cemetery was full. A conflict arose among the Prefect, the Mayor and the

Commission of hospices which was insisting that it be enlarged. It was closed temporarily, and a major enlargement would have to wait until the end of the century.

The Chilvert cemetery

The name Chilvert is derived from a very ancient place-name. In an act dating from the year 989, it was referred to as "In Villa quae dicitur Gilverto." A 1384 text calls it "Chillevert." The cemetery, officially opened in 1797 by necessity, was enlarged in 1845 and 1861. In olden days, it was reserved for residents of the city centre. This explains the large number of chapels built along the paths.

The cemetery of Pierre-levée

It was created in 1828. According to a report by the Commission of hospices, it was hoped that it would follow the example of Père Lachaise in Paris.

The cemetery of Cueilie

This is the most recent, dating from 1937. It has a more contemporary design than the city's other cemeteries, containing a commemorative garden and a columbarium. ♦

Some symbols found on the monuments

- Ivy symbolizes the permanence of nature, and persistence of desire. It represents the eternal cycle of death and rebirth, the myth of the eternal return.
- The lily is synonymous with whiteness and therefore purity, innocence, and virginity. It is the promise of immortality and salvation.
- The poppy represents the power of sleep and forgetting which seizes men after death and before rebirth.
- The pansy symbolizes meditation and reflection, as well as faithful memory.
- The oak stands especially for solidity, strength, longevity, and height, in the spiritual and physical sense.
- A column, with base and capital, stands for the "tree of life"; the base symbolizes its roots, the shaft represents the trunk, and the capital, its foliage. Truncated, it represents a broken life.
- The torch symbolizes purification by fire. It is the lamp that lights the crossroads of the underworld, and the path of initiation. Reversed, it symbolizes life extinguished.
- The chain surrounding the monument symbolizes the separation of life and death, the respect the living owe to the dead.
- Round or square funerary urns evoke the symbolism of the home. In antiquity, the ashes of the deceased were placed in urns. In the arts, the urn is also the vase from which water flows, symbolizing the fertility of the waters. In democracies, they are used for collecting ballots, symbolizing the electoral system and the will of the people. When the ballots, water, and ashes are blended in a single urn, the urn is a symbol of social unity and diversity through a perpetual flow, and the cycle of life and death.
- The hourglass, symbol of death and the passing of time. The hourglass, which must be turned periodically, represents the cyclical nature of existence, the possibility of returning to the origin and of divine grace descending from heaven to earth. ♦

What the seashore has brought us

For many years, the sand artists of the Iles-de-la-Madeleine have been creating magnificent objects out of sand. These objects are solidified using a unique procedure. Sand has thus become one of the materials from which today's cinerary products are made, and it goes without saying that it is a highly original one.

Cinerary urns made entirely of solidified sand are just as sturdy as urns made from other materials. Their lines and

*Golden sand
Where I sleep
Life, like you,
Has run between
My fingers...
The last wave
Washed me up
In your arms...
Golden sand,
Where I sleep evermore*

(Céline Lebel)

shapes epitomize the simplicity and beauty of the material... pure poetry!

Surely everyone has had the chance to build castles in the sand during trips to the seashore! And has fallen asleep on the sand, dreaming of distant places! Thinking of this, the sand artists have created cinerary urns that are reproductions of castles, full of impressive detail.

These urns are on display in the cemetery's salons. ♦

Johanne Duchesne
Director, Marketing



To serve you better...

Our group of funeral consultants has grown recently, with the arrival of three new members. These new additions to our staff will form our team of prearrangement specialists and will be available exclusively to assist individuals and families who wish to prearrange their funerals or obtain information in this regard.

Our consultants will be available to meet individuals interested in this service either at home or by appointment at our offices during the day, in the evening or on the weekend—entirely at your convenience.

These highly qualified members of our staff will be able to offer you a complete range of services, from the purchase of a concession (crypt, niche or plot) to the selection of a monument and inscription, and the organization of the memorial ceremony, down to the most minute detail of the funeral. All of these services are offered on site. Furthermore, we will be pleased to work closely with you in creating a payment plan that suits your budget.

Thanks to this new approach, your concerns with regard to funeral planning will be greatly diminished.

*For more information, do not hesitate to return
the coupon included in this bulletin.*

Monthly Masses

All masses are held on Saturdays.

They will be held on June 1,

July 6, August 3, 2002.

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

FREE PARKING

ACTIVITIES

**Guided cemetery tours on June 9 at 10:30 a.m.,
August 11 at 10:30 a.m.
and September 8 at 1 p.m.**

**Commemorative mass on June 16 at 11 a.m.,
Father's Day, at Chapelle de la Résurrection**



SEASONS OF GRIEF AND HEALING

A guide for those who mourn

Author: James E. Miller

A thoughtful, compassionate guide for anyone who has lost a loved one. Drawn from Jim Miller's best-selling *Winter Grief*, *Summer Grace*, this little book brings understanding and renewal to times of grief.

James E. Miller is a clergyman, grief counsellor, retreat leader, photographer, video producer, and the author of *Augsburg's Willowgreen Series* and *A Little Book for Preachers*.

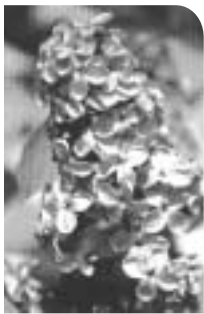


The Journey through Grief

It's as if the realness of what has happened waits around the corner.

I don't want to make the turn,
yet I know I must. Slowly, I gather
the courage to approach

A GARDEN of memories



The Lilac

The lilac is, without question, the best known flowering shrub in Quebec. Lilacs have ornamented the province's landscape for several centuries.

Who among us has not had, at some time, the good fortune to place a few lilac flowers in a vase and to smell their pleasing perfume. At the cemetery, lilacs are everywhere. The nicest groupings are found near the Decelles street entrance and the administrative office.

Many decades of research have led to the development of over 400 new varieties of lilacs. These new additions are grouped under the name of French Hybrids and offer us a multitude of colours and fragrances. Among the best known are the Madame Lemoine (white flowers), the Charles Joly (magenta flowers), and the Katherine Havemeyer (blue flowers).



The dwarf lilac Meyeri, "Palibin," is a Chinese variety that was first introduced to North America in 1908, and is now found throughout the continent. It has proven to be an excellent find for all space-restricted areas. Reaching a height and width of four to five feet, it can be quite useful as a border for monuments.

Growing Lilacs

The lilac is a fairly easy plant to cultivate. It is necessary, however, to make sure that it is planted in well-aerated, well-drained soil. It requires exposure to sunlight. The pruning schedule is the most important aspect of lilac cultivation. It should take place as soon as the flowers wither. Late pruning will deprive the shrub of its flowers the following spring.

Yvon Pagé

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

Father's Day

Once heroes and pillars of the family, fathers were the solid male foundation upon which families were built and supported.

Today, fathers play a slightly different role in the lives of their children. Less of a patriarch, the modern father is more involved with his children and is, at heart, a doting parent. The father remains, nevertheless, a role model for his children, who admire and wish to resemble him.

In the United States, fathers have been celebrated since 1924, and in 1966, the third Sunday in June was fixed as the date for this celebration. In France, Father's Day is newer than Mother's Day: 1952 for the establishment of Father's Day versus 1950 for Mother's Day. Since then, there has been no cause for jealousy, only a few little differences—gifts of irons or vacuum cleaners to one... ties or razors to the other.

However, although these gifts may be new, they have become worn out through constant reappearance. No, the best gift remains the little gift that comes from the bottom of the heart.



Try to explain why, when one's father is evoked on an occasion like this, the mind fills with a profusion of outdoor images accompanied by the odour of freshly-cut hay and of pine bathed in dew, along with the sound of green leaves rustling in the morning breeze, a soft refrain from olden times that are not really so far off.

Try to explain how the simple act of thinking of one's father produces a burst of freshness that expands the heart and urges us to head onwards.

So, is it surprising that, on this day, we should want to offer him a big thank you for the gift of life he has given us?

Francine Mc Duff, (Text found on the Internet.)

*Because I could not
Stop for Death*

Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death
He kindly stopped for me
The Carriage held but just Ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain
We passed the Setting Sun

Or rather – He passed Us
The Dews drew quivering and chill
For only Gossamer, my Gown
My Tippet – only Tulle

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground
The Roof was scarcely visible
The Cornice – in the Ground

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity

The Horticulture, Arboriculture, and Landscaping Teams

The arrival of spring at our Cemetery signifies the beginning of landscaping work and the completion of the flower production work that began during the winter. Approximately fifteen employees are assigned to the various tasks involved.

The greenhouse attendants and the team's head gardener have been working since the beginning of the year to cultivate a wide variety of flowers, which will ornament, among other things, the cemetery's flower beds during the fine-weather season. It should be noted that these employees also undertake the specialized cultivation of floral mosaics.

Their horticultural expertise and the attention to detail they bring to their work provide the cemetery and its clientele with sturdy, top-quality plants. These employees, some of whom have 30 or 40 years of experience, also provide knowledgeable advice to the clients who come to our greenhouses to buy flowers for their cemetery plots or their homes.

Many of the flowers produced by the greenhouse team are used in the cemetery's landscaping. Starting at the end of May and the beginning of June, landscaping teams go to work to transform our Cemetery into a flowering garden. The large decorative beds situated at the Côte-des-Neiges and Decelles entrances, which beautifully incorporate the Fabrique's logo, are worth noting. The floral arrangements surrounding all the cemetery's buildings are also the work of these teams, which, in addition, maintain these floral creations.

Our clients can also request the services of our landscaping teams to decorate their plots. Standard landscape arrangements, which take into account a plot's exposure to sunlight, are available at very reasonable prices. These services can be requested at our administrative offices.

The arboriculture team must also be mentioned. This team, composed of pruners and assistant pruners, sees to the care and maintenance of over 9,500 trees, whose ages vary from ten to 250 years old.

All work is carried out with proper attention to the conservation and reforestation of the site according to an ecological approach. For this reason, more than 150 trees have been or will be planted this year on the cemetery's territory, and reforestation will continue over the coming years.

Come visit us this summer and admire the wonderful garden that Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery has become! ♦

Michelle Bourget, Director of Human Resources

