



NOTRE-DAME-DES-NEIGES  
CEMETERY

Where life is a garden of memories

# Dialogue

*Notre-Dame-Des-Neiges Cemetery Newsletter*

*Vol. 3 No. 10 December 2001*

## *The Tale of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges (Part VII)*

**At** the end of the 20th century, Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery was once again experiencing a changing context. Since the Catholic Church had now accepted the practice of cremation, and funeral rites in Québec had changed over the years, numerous mausoleum-columbariums have been opened since 1978. In 1994, therefore, the role of the old charnel house was modified, and it became the Saint Claire of Assisi mausoleum. In 1996, the Saint Marguerite of Youville mausoleum was built; its semi-underground design minimizes its visual impact.

Other changes were made around the administration pavilion. The greenhouses were moved to make room for a garden, adorned with a fountain at the cemetery's main intersection; the replica of the Lourdes grotto was converted into a private vault. May 9, 1999—Mother's Day—saw the unveiling of the bronze statue depicting Notre-Dame-des-Neiges, created by Pierre Osterrath; it was placed at the top of an outdoor columbarium located in the Notre Dame section.

We have thus reached the end of our century-and-a-half journey through the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery. Since its beginnings, many people have passed through its gates, all contributing in their own way to creating the cemetery that we know today. Perreault, Lemieux, Brunet, Lapointe, to name but a few, all had something in common: developing a Catholic cemetery in a magnificent natural setting, which has occasionally been mishandled. Our journey has also enabled us to relive a few moments in Montréal's history, with Mgr. Bourget and the Récollets, and recall important events in our society's development.

Notre-Dame-des-Neiges is an oasis in the midst of a city, a harmonious natural refuge set between life, and death. Its shaded pathways, and summer flowers, the forest aroma in fall, the subdued light of winter, the hopeful babbling of spring all encourage contemplation, calm, reflection, and serenity. In the New Year, let us try to live by the words of Antoine de St. Exupéry: "Only the heart sees clearly. What is essential is invisible to the eye."

In order to pursue this goal, and improve on it, our institution has created a master development plan which covers the next twenty years, so as to preserve the necessary equilibrium between plant life, nature, and the built environment.

In upcoming issues, we will look at the main stages in development, and steps required to protect a space that has been green since 1854. ♦



**Yolande Tremblay**, General Manager

# WORKERS OF THE MAUSOLEUMS

There are 8 mausoleums within the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery, located in different spaces on the site; some can house several thousand coffins or cinerary urns. A body which rests in a coffin is placed in a crypt, and the opening is closed with a marble sheet; the ashes of the deceased are placed in a cinerary urn, then the urn is placed in a niche, and the opening covered by a marble sheet, or a sheet of glass.

The process of placing a coffin in a crypt, or placing an urn in a niche is always part of a ceremony involving family and friends. The procedures are handled by employees assigned to the mausoleums.

The coffin that is to go in the crypt is carried on a trolley that allows the coffin to be moved and, where necessary, raised to place it in the crypt. These delicate procedures, however mechanical, are carried out with decorum, and with complete respect for the deceased and his or her family.

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The crypt opening is then covered with a film to seal off access, and with the marble sheet that was removed prior to the ceremony. This task requires strength and dexterity from those who work in the mausoleum, given the combined fragility and weight of the marble.

Those who work in the mausoleum also take care of maintenance. Also assigned to the mausoleum are employees who install the ornaments on the marble sheets. These ornaments, made of bronze, can display the deceased person's name, birth date, and date of death, a photograph on porcelain, decorations (flours, angel, cross, etc.) or any other dec-

oration allowed by cemetery management.

This job requires a great deal of precision and skill from the employee in charge of installing ornaments. They must have both an eye for installing ornaments in a harmonious way, and the expertise required to install valuable objects on a marble sheet that is even more valuable.

It should be noted that mausoleum workers carry out their

tasks before family and friends of the deceased who are frequently from a variety of cultural communities having their own rites and customs. The workers must thus conform to these customs, and be

both highly adaptable, and thoroughly diplomatic.

In spite of the many years' experience of many of the mausoleum workers, they have not become less sensitive to the grief and emotions shown by the deceased person's family and friends during this final farewell. We wish to emphasize that these employees continue to demonstrate considerable and consistent strength of character.

Those who work in the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery mausoleums care about a job well done, and the remarkable beauty of their mausoleums. ♦

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



**Michelle Bourget,**  
Director, Human Resources

By Johanne de Montigny, psychologist

## Mourning together: *reminders of personal grief*

September 11, 2001 is a day that is having important consequences for all of us. The crumbling of New York's twin towers and the simultaneous catastrophe in Washington have plunged us into a mourning process that is at once collective and personal. The grief that follows is in proportion to the number of lives lost, whereas the brutality of bodies lost propels us into an impossible bereavement lasting for an indefinite period of time. To be able to bear the atrocity of these massive, destructive, and satanic attacks, we need to join movements of creativity, solidarity and hope to build a better world. The President of the United States had perhaps no choice but to adopt a defensive attitude on behalf of an entire group that he described as being "between mourning and response" but, personally, I hold to the expression long espoused by the management of the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery: "*Between mourning and hope.*" Under this banner, I can identify the possibilities that are alive within us and which compensate for the terrible feelings of powerlessness created by such a traumatic event.

In the days that followed the tragedies at New York's World Trade Centre and in Washington, each of my patients referred to a collective grief and unique compassion which they felt at their greatest depths, and beyond their own specific challenges, forgetting their own distress for a time. This heartfelt,

soul-full reaction surges up during the worst of times in an incommensurable desire to pay profound attention to those who are experiencing an unexpected and unavoidable upheaval, with no room to manoeuvre to transform the reality's horror into a nightmarish scene from which all are trying desperately to awaken.

transform themselves into survivors in order to call on inner and community strengths, gaining time to absorb the blow with resilience and not crumble like the towers.

Sorrow, anger, fear, intolerance, feelings of revenge have each surfaced in turn, without warning. Paradoxical and varied emotions have seized people



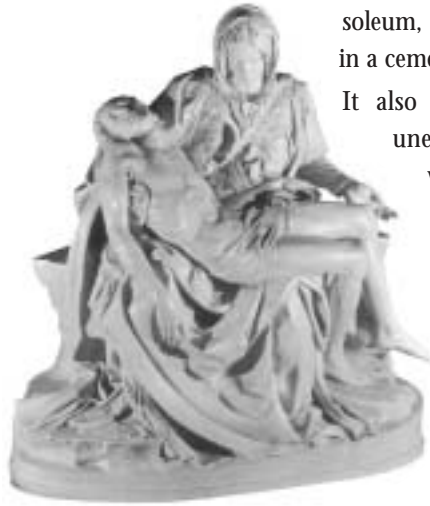
The print and spoken press has given words to the images which leave an indelible trace in each of us: the mark of death, disappearance, evanescence, and no return. For days and weeks, survivors gathered to counter the massive absence of dear ones. They stayed, standing before the destroyed places, holding onto photos of their loved ones, the ones they sought, expected. On the news, a woman told the rescuers: "If you see a man with long eyelashes and a Rollex, bring him out quickly, that's my husband." This cry from the heart at once attests to the ultimate in distress and hope. Hope here works as an implosion, a sort of inner light, in order to survive disaster, the explosions on the outside. In such moments, the bereaved

around the world. A sense of urgency has brutally invaded us, and anxiety has overwhelmed us. The words terrorism, apocalypse, and counterstrike have during this time triumphed over the words sharing, peace, equality. While whole populations have suffered horribly, others have celebrated the feeling of justice through violence. These divergent reactions have shaken us terribly. While some mourned, others danced and sang victory songs. Some experienced paralysis, others exultation. These opposed reactions show the magnitude of the differences among human beings.

From a much smaller perspective, and better suited to the values of peoples with whom we identify, such a picture of human populations forces us

## *Dying with grace*

First it must be said that, today, people no longer want to look death in the face. Thus, in these advanced societies, people try to banish anything that reminds them of death. It often happens that a loved one is cremated at their request, and the ashes are scattered in a field, or near a river as if, in this manner, we no longer wish to be reminded of death, or of death's symbols, such as a mausoleum, columbarium, or tomb in a cemetery.



It also happens that we feel uneasy when confronted with someone we know well who is dying. If it is due to the pain of seeing them disappear little by little, this is very normal! But if it is because it reminds us of our own death, which will one day occur, we don't like being

faced with it. A text from the German episcopate on this subject contains a very human truth: *“The most difficult thing about attending to the dying lies in the fact that the death*

*of a man requires that those who are in attendance confront their own mortality.”* <sup>(1)</sup>

And, in order to continue living after a loved one's departure, it is necessary to find **meaning in death**. Christianity interprets it in this way: *“Because of Christ, Christian death is positive.” “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (New Testament, Ph. 1.21)... *“Through Baptism, a Christian is already sacramentally dead with Christ, to live a new life, and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death consumes this death with Christ, and thus completes our incorporation into Him in an act of redemption.”* <sup>(2)</sup>

This Christian faith professed by the Christian can only be salutary at the crucial moment when he passes from this world to the next: Saint Ignatius of Antioch, speaking on this subject, adds: *“My worldly desire has been crucified... there is in me a living water that murmurs, and says within me: “Come to God.”* <sup>(2)</sup>

In prayer, I ask the Lord: give me the grace of a good death. The ending of **Hail Mary** is appropriate here: *“Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.”*

(1) Cited in V. Messori, *Pari sur la mort*, Marne, Paris, 1984, p. 39.

(2) Catechism of the Catholic Church, Marne-Pilon, nos. 1010, 1011.

**Mgr. Yvon Bigras**, p.s.s., C.S.S.

**MISSING** From page 3



to reflect on difference. The much less extreme differences between us, the people of Québec, exists in our ways of experiencing family and personal dramas. The striking element in the discourse surrounding bereavement is the range of ways in which the experience of loss is perceived. When a family member is lost, each member of the family is touched in a unique way. Although most authors agree about the states and stages of mourning that characterize the path of those afflicted, i.e. shock, destabilization, sorrow and rebuilding, it is important to understand that each and every person experiences these events in terms of their own personality, experiences, psychological health, values they have acquired, and inner world.

The collective grief we have been experiencing since September 11, 2001 has stirred the personal bereavements that

you and I have had to go through in our lives. Yet, what gives me the courage to live now is dependent on the emotional legacy left by those who disappeared in the World Trade Center and Washington tragedies. I think of those who made calls before dying, a call to love which they showed their loved ones from the outset; I think of all the firefighters and rescue workers who climbed the stairway of death, driven only by the desire to save imperilled lives at the risk of their own; I think of the support efforts which were started spontaneously, around the world, through rare expressions, demonstrations of collective sympathy. I think of all those beings who died for us, and who invite us to continue, on their behalf, a life work which they were unable to complete before departing. May the *“Dialogue”* express the homage that we render to them, forever. ♦

by *Chistian Biot, Priest of Diocese of Lyon, France*

## Funeral rites and traditions

In France, as in many western countries, services surrounding death are subject to the same commercial rules as all other activities. Some complain about the situation, and others see it as a just regulation of a market that is by and large not very different from other markets.

However, when we look closely, these commercial developments are not without impact on the rites. This is, moreover, what has been alarming leaders in the French Catholic church for the last several years. To understand the situation properly, let us look at some history.

In the Middle Ages, when the plague was decimating so many human lives, the Church was recognized as playing a leading part in everything that surrounded death. Its role was so great that, during the Revolution, public authorities took away their prerogative, and made it secular. This was confirmed at the beginning of the 20th century by a law giving cities and towns control over funerals.

This very structured organization did not stand up to the liberalization of the economy and, in 1993, the funeral sector was finally dominated by the laws of the market.

### What can we learn?

- Firstly, that questions related to death and funerals are extremely powerful and symbolic, and that is thus not

astounding that revolutionary movements wished to appropriate them from religion. This is true of the French Revolution, and also of communist regimes.

- Secondly, market laws are not without consequences for rites already weakened by the lifestyle changes and the dechristianization process that began after the Second World War.

In what concrete ways can commercial issues affect funeral rites? Here are some examples:



Traditionally, Catholic funerals take place in three stages: the place where the remains rest (site of the funeral wake), the place of the celebration (the home parish), and the place of the final farewell (cemetery or crematorium). These three stages are like a condensed version of the mourning process: each embodies a necessary physical separation. The French bishops used very human arguments to recall the value of this process, and the importance of respecting all its stages. This is not a rearguard battle to defend outdated cul-

tural prerogatives, but rather a powerful human challenge which is both psychological (related to the mourning process) and social (thanks to the public character given to death by a church celebration).

Yet this traditional three-stage journey is now being increasingly challenged. Why? In large part because businesses have a clear interest in rationalizing and thus reducing the process. They have better success insofar as, more and more often, grieving families are not involved in any religious practice.

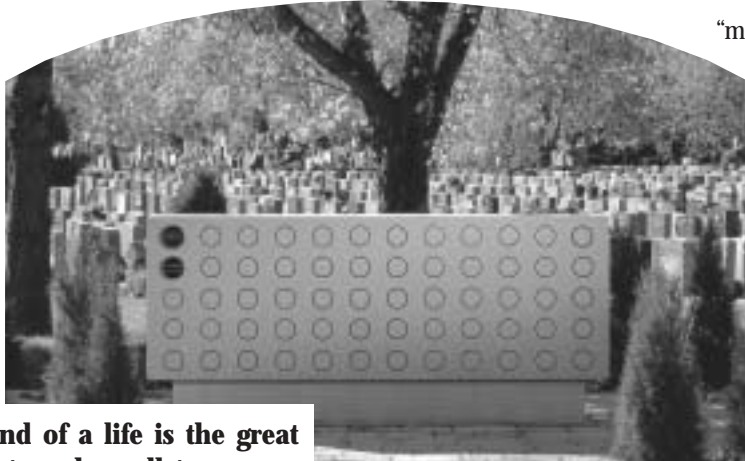
This is how business issues progressively and often very insidiously impoverish the rites, by trying to adapt them to economic imperatives.

It is hard for religion to react to such changes. But how not react when this is the essence of their mission, a statement of faith?

The Diocese of Paris decided to provide a response to these issues by becoming the representative of families as soon as a death was announced. Although it does not replace funeral companies, the Catholic Funeral Service, created in November 2000, was founded to organize funerals. The goal is to bring confidence and compassion to the bereaved, while suggesting that they experience the rites offered by the Catholic Church in these circumstances. ♦

# The Angelus, *prayer for morning, noon, and night*

The origins of the Angelus are associated with the dissemination of the Ave Maria, the greeting of the Angel Gabriel as a private prayer. The reciting of three Ave Marias, morning, noon, and night, would soon be



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accompanied by the ringing of bells as a call to prayer. What a lovely tradition! All these people joining spiritually to recite prayers, a gentle thought offered to the Virgin.

It is the evening Angelus that is reproduced in the work of painter Jean-François Millet; this magnificent work depicts twilight, the end of the day, and the coming night. Since the end of a life is the great departure into night, and a call to prayer, we have decided to name the new outdoor columbarium “The Angelus.” This columbarium is a large monument of barre gray granite

from Vermont whose front and rear facades contain 70 niches each.

This is the first of three identical columbariums to be erected over the next few years. Landscaping will adorn the surroundings, and a shrub-lined pathway gives the monument a respectful and solemn aspect.

The columbarium’s original appearance is repeated in the cylindrical niches, in which urns of the same shape are inserted. The urn is then sealed inside the niche, and topped with a bronze cover on which the loved one’s name, birth date, and date of death are engraved. The niche includes the cinerary urn. This type of collective

“monument-columbarium” is new to Québec, meeting a growing demand for sites in which to entomb cinerary urns. This year, nearly 60% of the interments at our cemetery were cremations, and more and more clients opt for interment sites other than the traditional burial of the urn in earth. To view this beautiful location, walk towards the section-V islets, near the Camilien Houde entrance.

Niches in the “Angelus” columbarium are very affordable; purchases made by pre-arrangement benefit from payment plans that carry no interest and are based on your budget.

This site will be open to visitors at all times, and families will be able to use it for contemplation, benefiting from the beautiful landscape presented by the seasons. Take a moment to meet with our counsellors. ♦

**Johanne Duchesne**  
Director, Marketing

## Book of Remembrance

The holiday season is approaching and you don’t have the heart for the festivities after the loss of a loved one. Celebrate your enjoyment by writing a few words in the Book of Remembrance to tell him or her of your attach-

ment in your own unique way. Send us a text, a poem, a message, and a photo. This could help abate the emptiness you feel at his or her departure. You can also meet with us; we’ll be happy to tell you more about it.

**WORDS OF FAREWELL**

“Et souviens-toi que je t’attends” [“Remember that I await you”]

preface by Jean Rouaud, Editions Albin Michel

It is a message, the most precious message in its grave of tears, a present that is dedicated to the best actions, to the highest that the soul can conceive, the most loving and compassionate, this despatch is to God. Thus, for our dead, for the multitude, for the consolation of the living, for the echo of the voice from the chasm of absence: these words sent to God.



**HEALING WORDS**

When words go unspoken, too often, the violence of pain is awoken. But it is not enough to break the silence, and begin to speak; it also necessary to feel accepted, heard, and amplified. There are words vibrant with life, patience and enthusiasm about compassion. Sometimes, much more time is necessary for a word to become



speech, to emerge from the limbo of the imagination that conceived it, and be born.

**HEALING WITHOUT WAR**

by Johanne Ledoux

The contemporary reaction to cancer is a declaration of war. Johanne Ledoux chose instead to heal without the battle. Ten years later, she shares her experience of healing by putting together the thoughts, perspectives, and approaches that sustained her in her journey, “since the path taken by one person can sometimes inspire another’s journey.”



**A GARDEN  
of memories**

**December,  
the decorative month**

Families need to be able to manifest their affection for their departed loved ones. Our greenhouses offer several models of wreaths and saddles. Made of multicoloured artificial plants, these decorations add a touch of life to sleeping nature.



The horticulturists of the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges greenhouses unite to wish all a time of joy and enjoyment, and a happy New Year.

**Yvon Pagé**

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

**CD ON BEREAVEMENT  
VOL. 2**

We trust this CD will bring you some comfort and especially the hope that soon the wonderful memories you have of your loved one will take the place of pain in your heart and remain with you forever.



If you have questions about grief and bereavement, do not hesitate to ask for our brochures on the psychological stages of mourning, or our new CD, or come and consult our library at 4601 Côte-des-Neiges Road, in the administration building.

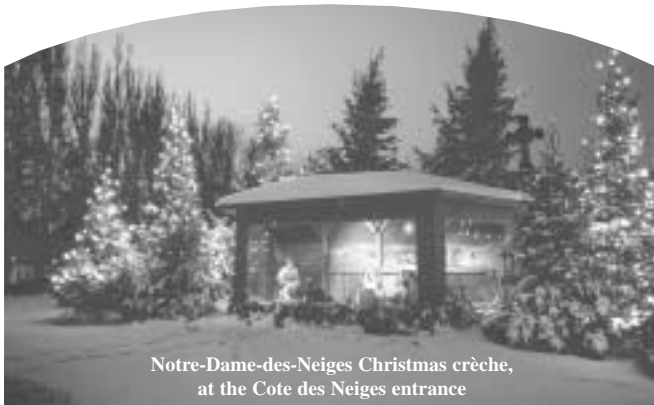
**Please fill out and return the attached order form.**



**The end-of-year holiday season is not always easy for those who have lost a loved one during the year.**

**The management and staff of the cemetery wish you a warm and tender Christmas, and a happy New Year for 2002.]**

## The family crèche



Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Christmas crèche,  
at the Cote des Neiges entrance

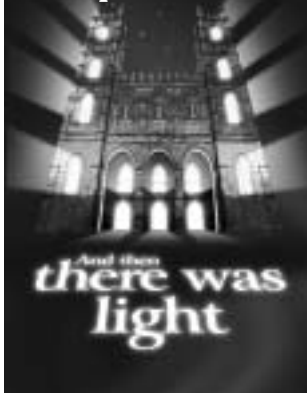
In Québec, the Christmas crèche has been part of our tradition since New France began. However, it was only in 1875 that it began to make its way into private homes, and become part of family ritual. Even before we started to put up Christmas trees, the crèche had already been given a privileged place in the family home.

The custom of placing a crèche beneath the tree became current during the 1930s. Many families built their own stables, and bought figures to place in them. Subsequently, villages appeared beneath the tree, created from small houses scattered around the crèche.

The crèche tradition has arisen around the world: African wood crèches, crèches with an Asian baby Jesus, silver crèches in Rumania. In Latin America, there are as many types of crèches as there are villages, made from wood, terra cotta, play dough, and even sugar. ♦

*Francine Mc Duff*, text taken from the Internet.

### The Notre-Dame Basilica of Montréal presents



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#### Ticket

#### Admission Network

(514) 790-1245

1-800-361-4595

[www.admission.com](http://www.admission.com)

#### Notre-Dame Basilica

**Montréal** (514) 842-2925  
ext. 226

#### Outside of Montréal area

1-866-842-2925

## Spotlight on new Internet features

We launched our new Web site a few months ago, and now we are introducing several new elements. There are three new sections:

- Searching for a deceased person
- Genealogy • Death notices

You can now search for a deceased person from the comfort of your own home. The application will post a results window containing all the results for the name of the deceased person, the name of his or her spouse, and the date on which he or she was inducted into the cemetery.



We will also offer a tool to help you construct your family tree. The tree can be completed in conjunction with family members, since each one can access it. The tree is saved in memory, and can be accessed using a code and a password.

From now on, we will be publishing funeral notices. Specifically, the name of the deceased person, and the date and time of funerals will be posted. The information will be updated daily: the two upcoming weeks will be posted, including the day in progress.

You will soon be able to purchase some of our products on line. Visit us on the internet... there's always something new.

*Diane St-Pierre*, Supervisor of information technology

### Monthly Masses

All masses are held on Saturdays.

They will be held on January 5, February 2,  
March 2 and April 6, 2002.

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

**FREE PARKING**