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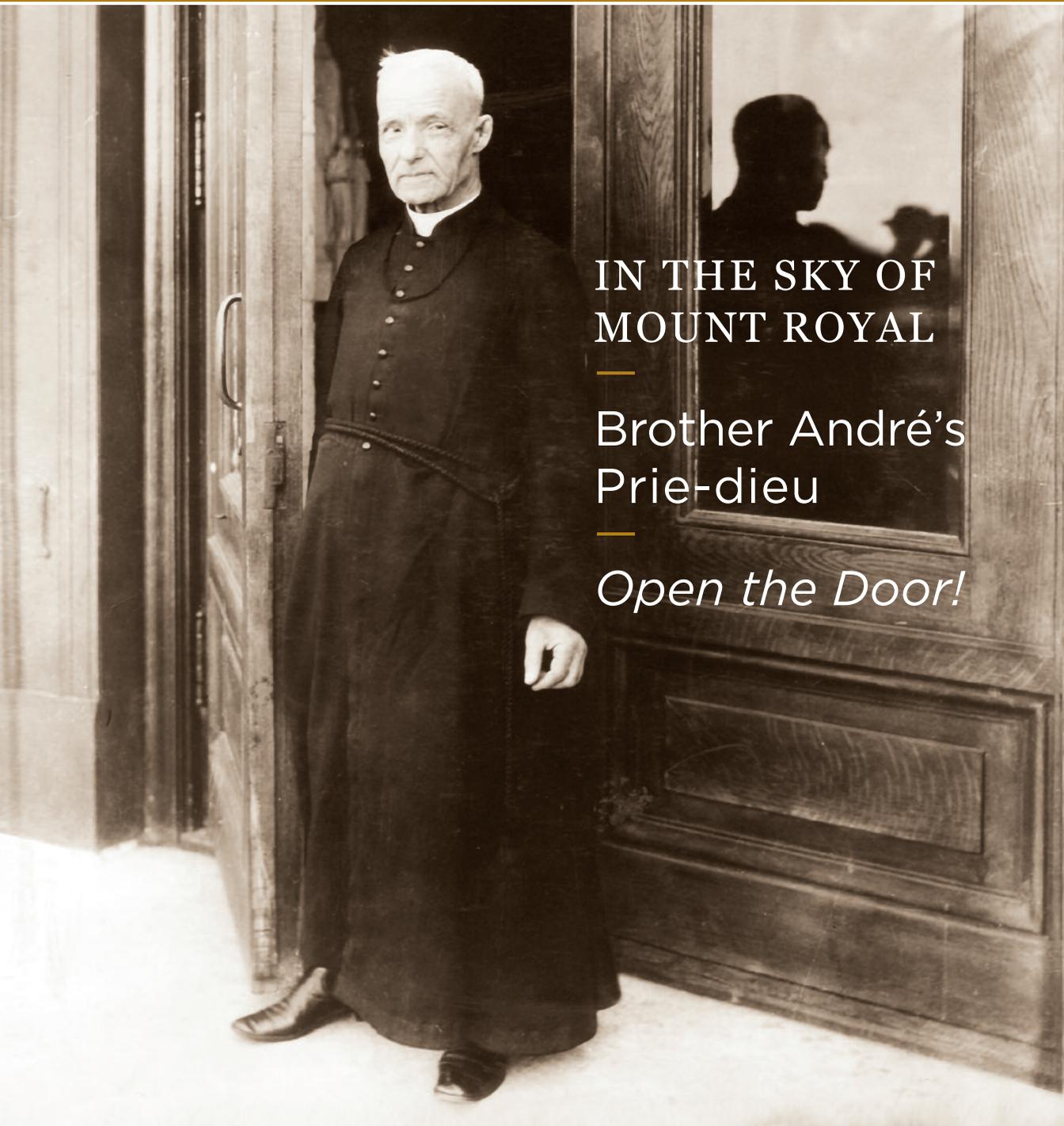
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100th • THE CRYPT CHURCH

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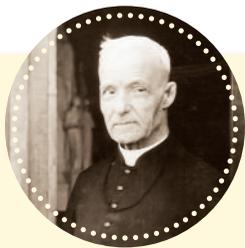
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IN THE SKY OF
MOUNT ROYAL

—
Brother André's
Prie-dieu

—
Open the Door!



The Crypt Church: 100 years!

In the autumn edition of *The Oratory* magazine, we pay tribute to the Crypt Church of Saint Joseph's Oratory, inaugurated on Mount Royal on December 16, 1917. In the issue, we present a number reminiscences selected from its one-hundred year history — one hundred years of existence.

To get in the spirit of these festivities for the 100th, let's break out the family album. We'll meet there our brother, André, whose presence, welcome, and prayer have characterized this place of worship dedicated to Saint Joseph.

A good read!

The Team of Editors

Excerpt from THE ORATORY magazine,
Sept.-December 2017, VOL. 91. NO 3, pages 5 to 10.

The Oratory magazine, founded in 1927, is published three times a year by Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. It includes articles on Saint Brother André, Saint Joseph, the artistic heritage of the Oratory, texts for reflection and prayers, news of the sanctuary, and more! The full 24-page publication is available in print with an annual subscription cost of \$8. To discover!

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In the Sky of Mount Royal

by David BUREAU, Archivist

The adventure of the Crypt Church opens up into the sky of Mount Royal. Several steps were taken in 1914 to allow the construction of a place of worship that could respond effectively to the constant and growing number of visitors and pilgrims to the small chapel of Brother André. The Congregation of Holy Cross authorized the proceedings in January and, at the end of the same month, obtained the blessing of Most Rev. Paul Bruchési, Archbishop of Montreal. The contract was signed with architects Viau and Venne on March 19, 1914, and with contractor Ulric Boileau, on May 12, 1915, for the construction of a Crypt Church. Brother André's signature appears on this contract as a witness to the agreement.

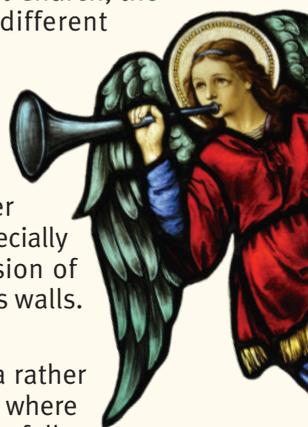
It is not a simple church that was to be built on the side of the mountain but a sanctuary for the “Glorious Patriarch” so that he may be “honoured even more appropriately”, as noted in the August 1915 issue of *Les Annales de Saint-Joseph*. The article adds that the Crypt Church is only a “part of the buildings that will be built later [...] which will include the Crypt Church, the Oratory or Church, the Rectorate and the levelling works to accommodate different chapels, and the embellishment of the park on the outskirts of the Oratory”.

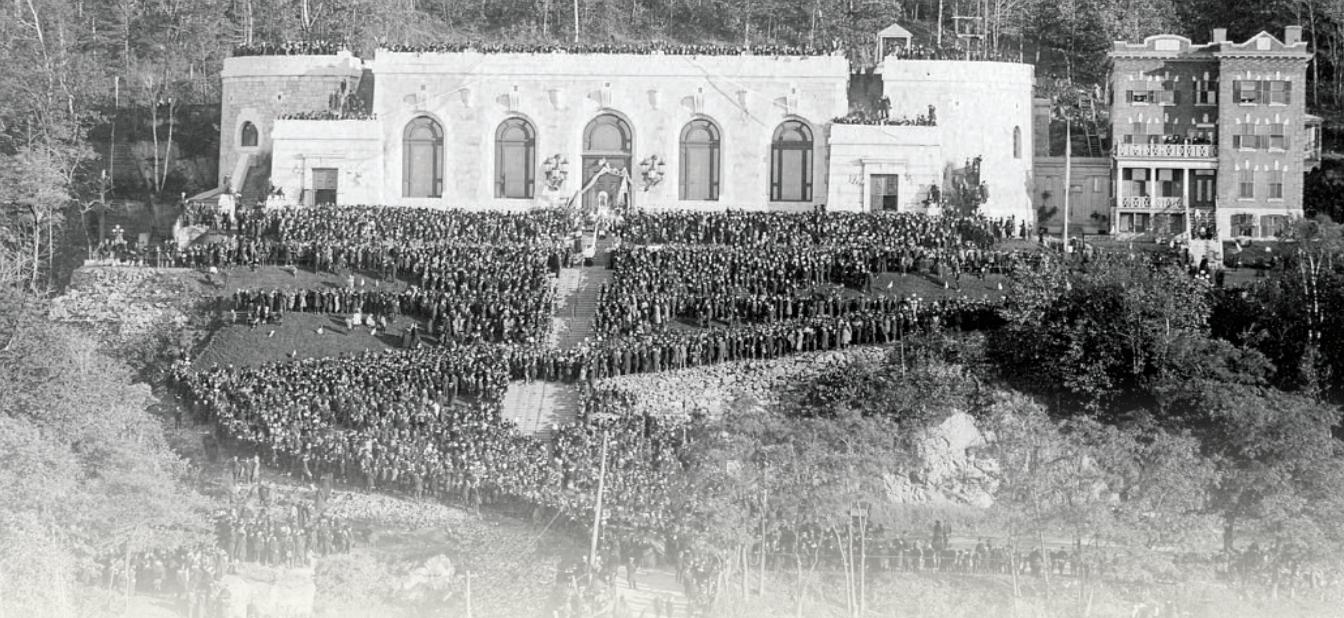
The new Crypt Church would be inaugurated on Sunday, December 16, 1917, and its main altar consecrated the following day.

In 1926, professor Arthur Saint-Pierre made a description of this great master plan dreamed up ten years earlier. Concerning the Crypt Church, he says: “It is especially remarkable for its robustness. Already, from the outside, it gives an impression of strength and rare solidity by the imposing dimension of the stones making up its walls. Inside, the impression becomes clearer and stronger.”

And on a more bucolic note, the author adds that the site is surrounded “by a rather slender but fairly bushy forest, where oaks, maples, white birches dominate, but where here and there the eternal green of pine, fir or spruce shines through”. The carefully maintained slope, shrubs and paths, as well as the monument of Alfred Laliberté at the entrance of the site, erected in 1923, complete this vision of beauty. ●

As a tribute to the 100th anniversary of the Crypt Church, which we celebrate in December, let the Oratory archives share some memories. ►





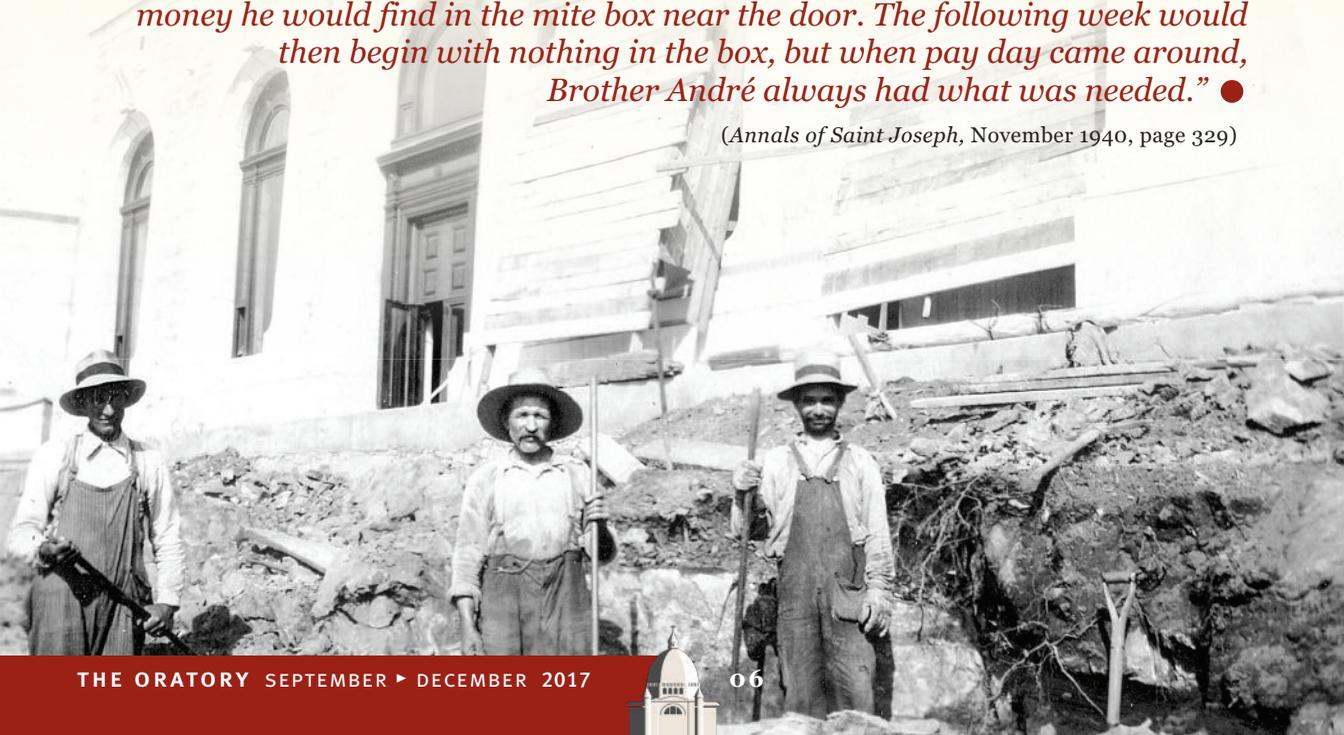
A Huge Crowd!

Already at the time of the first chapel, the site welcomed great pilgrimages and numerous processions. There were thousands of pilgrims present at the Oratory for certain feasts and events, even during the construction of the Crypt Church. It is a place of gathering for pious associations and movements. For example, October 10, 1920, the *Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne* (Catholic association for Canadian youth) brought together 50,000 people on the site as part of the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church (photo above). Corpus Christi, the Feast of Sacred Heart, the Labour Day are all opportunities to gather and celebrate in the Crypt Church of the Oratory. Other activities became traditions: the night pilgrimage on January 1, the Mass for the Sick, the Way of the Cross each Friday and, of course, the Novena to Saint Joseph established in 1920 that is still practised today. ●

A Worker's Testimony

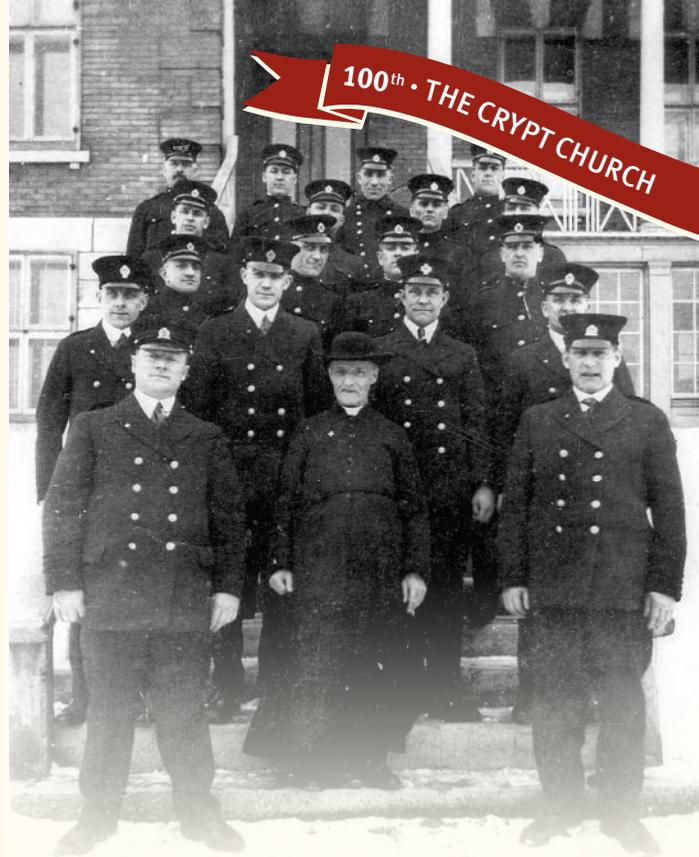
“Brother André often came to visit us, and you may be sure that everybody was fond of listening to him. At the end of every week, he always paid us with the money he would find in the mite box near the door. The following week would then begin with nothing in the box, but when pay day came around, Brother André always had what was needed.” ●

(Annals of Saint Joseph, November 1940, page 329)



Angels in Uniform

During the Novena to Saint Joseph in 1925, a visitor asked: “[Who are these] people in uniform with a well-groomed appearance and a remarkable dignity who give [their] service here?” They were none other than the Montreal firefighters. Led by Raoul Gauthier, director of the Montreal Fire Department, firefighters came to the Oratory many times when they were not on duty. For many of the sick or those unable to climb stairs leading to the Crypt Church, the volunteer firefighters were literally angels who unhesitatingly lifted them up and led them to Saint Joseph’s feet. They secured order and security for each of the great events celebrated in the Crypt Church; the most spectacular being certainly the funeral of Brother André in January 1937. ●



Last Farewell to Brother André

The Crypt Church of the Oratory is often the place of the last farewell when the death of a religious of the Congregation of Holy Cross occurs. Of all the funerals that have been celebrated there, none have been as large as that of the founder of the sanctuary, Brother André. In fact, the religious who died in odour of sanctity was entitled to two funeral services: the first at the cathedral of Montreal on January 9; and the second at the Crypt Church of Saint Joseph’s Oratory, on January 12. Immense crowds marched day and night in front of Brother André exposed in a fiery chapel in the Crypt Church from January 6 to 12, 1937.



In the *Annals of Saint Joseph*, Brother Placide, CSC, wrote: “All the night between Sunday and Monday, line after line of people passed without interruption. The people had but one idea in mind: *I must see Brother André before it is too late*. They rapped at the presbytery doors, they even tried to get in through the windows, in a word, they had recourse to all manner of ingenuity to attain their end. At the foot of the hill, the autos and the tramways vied with one another in emptying load after load. The people came by the thousands till the Oratory and the grounds were literally packed.

The triumphal cortege drew to an end. Tuesday, January 12th, at 8 o’clock A.M., the long procession is disbanded—all is over. Brother André is carried to the porch of the Crypt to enable those failed to make see their way to his casket to look on him for a last time. The Crypt Church is over-crowded.” ● (EDITED - ASJ, March 1937, pages 105-106)

Praying... at the Heart of the Sacristy

In the hours following the death of Brother André, people proceed with great respect to the resection of his heart as requested by Bishop Georges Gauthier. After the usual precautions to ensure its perennial preservation, the heart is returned to the Oratory and placed in a thick glass urn, enshrined in a fire-proof steel chest. The rector, Father Albert Cousineau, CSC, had it installed in the sacristy of the Crypt Church. The faithful are allowed to pray in front of the heart of Brother André but the religious underestimate the enthusiasm that surrounds the relic. The flow of visitors in the sacristy was incessant and did not prove very practical for the function of the place. On November 15, 1939, the heart is first moved to the former office of Brother André. Then, in March 1952, the reliquary is placed on a lower floor of the Basilica, which will become Brother André's first museum. ●



Two by two

In November 1939, two couples of Italian origin, accompanied by their families, placed their union under the protection of Saint Joseph. This example and thousands more are reported in the *Chronicles* of the shrine magazine. In 1940, the Sacred Congregation of Rites authorized the Oratory to celebrate, on January 26 each year, the Feast of Espousals of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph. A large crowd attended the first celebration of this feast in January 1941, during which the solemn blessing of the betrothal of 75 couples took place. This celebration is at the origin of the Marriage Preparation Service offered by Saint Joseph's Oratory, in collaboration with the Young Christian Workers, in order to accompany young people who are engaged in their preparation for married life. Today, this Service gathers 25 to 30 couples each year during weekend sessions, which are held at the Oratory. ●

Triumphant Closing of the 25th Anniversary

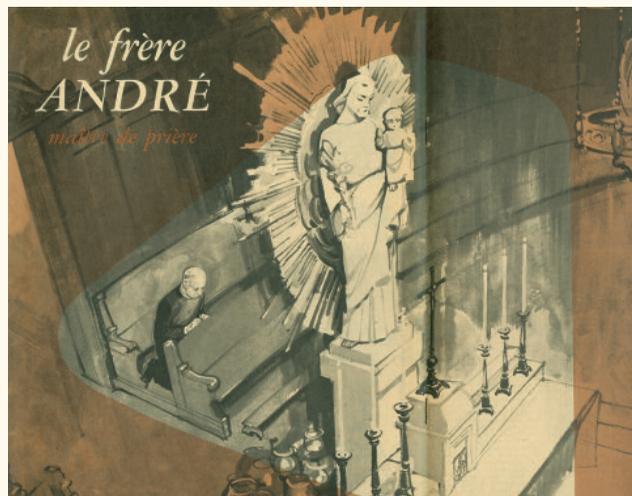
The consecration of the Crypt Church of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal was celebrated with great pomp on August 9, 1943, as a "Triumphal closing celebrations of the 25th anniversary," according to the *Annals*. For the occasion, the Crypt Church was adorned with garlands, flowers and a dense crowd attended the event. Most Rev. Joseph Charbonneau, Archbishop of Montreal, presided over the ceremony. The solemn preparation of the church and its altar leaves nothing to chance and nothing must be overlooked. As the bishop has to do the anointing of the walls of the Crypt Church, it is imperative not to forget the ladder so that he can mark crosses high on the walls. In spite of all this equipment, it is necessary to make sure to "easily be able to go around the church", specifies the ritual published in the souvenir brochure of the event. ●



Sing Along

Thousands of voices of men, women and children belonging to the choirs of parishes, associations, schools and colleges, enriched the celebrations in the Crypt Church, accompanied by the Casavant organ, which reigns supreme on the organ loft since 1917. Cantor and organist Ubald Parr, CSC, already marvelled in 1943 at the endless list, if one had to name all the choirs that have sung in this church since its inauguration in 1917. During the Novena to Saint Joseph in 1945, no fewer than 23 choirs participated in the Masses, including those of the Sainte-Croix Scholasticate, the Saint-Marc Parish, the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Parish, the Fire Department, the École Normale Jacques-Cartier, the École ménagère des Sœurs Grises and the Maîtrise de l'école Saint-Stanislas, to name but a few. Then, in 1956, the Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal started lending the harmony of their voices to the Masses and all the major events of Saint Joseph's Oratory. ●

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Master of Prayer

Over the years, the Crypt Church has been highlighted in the Oratory's magazines by numerous photographs, sketches and works of art. The July-August 1958 issue of the French magazine published an original illustration of artist Jacques Gagnier who presented Brother André in the choir stall where he often prayed, located behind the former high altar of the sanctuary of the Crypt Church. This illustration accompanied the article of Paul-E. Charbonneau, CSC, entitled *Frère André, Maître de prière* (Brother André, Master of Prayer). ●

Facing Renewal

In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the Crypt Church must undergo a major transformation. On July 20, 1965, the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy published the practical guidelines for liturgical renewal, which stipulate that the Holy Mass will henceforth be celebrated "facing the people." For the major altar to be in conformity, it must be separated from the wall so that we can walk around it. Moreover, it must be the centre of attention of the faithful, therefore not too far and clearly visible. Work began at the end of the summer of 1965. In this movement, the former high altar of 1917 was removed; the imposing statue of Saint Joseph was moved down a few feet and a new tabernacle was installed on the side altar of the sanctuary. The altar of the transformed Crypt Church was consecrated on June 29, 1967. ●



A Very Special Guest!

There was a great commotion on the morning of September 11, 1984, as the Crypt Church welcomed a first-rank visitor: Pope John Paul II. Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal was one of the stops on the 12-day itinerary that led the Pope across Canada. A thousand people, including Fathers, Brothers and Sisters of Holy Cross, Little Sisters of the Holy Family and employees of the Oratory gathered to share a moment of prayer with the head of the Church. Twice rather than once, the Holy Father knelt on the prie-dieu placed at his disposal in the central aisle of the Crypt Church. During the hymn "Noble Husband of Mary," John Paul II kept his eyes closed and prayed in silence. Then, he went to pray at the tomb of Brother André whom he had beatified on May 23, 1982, before continuing to the Basilica where more than 3,000 members of the clergy awaited him. ●

Photo: Murray Mosher

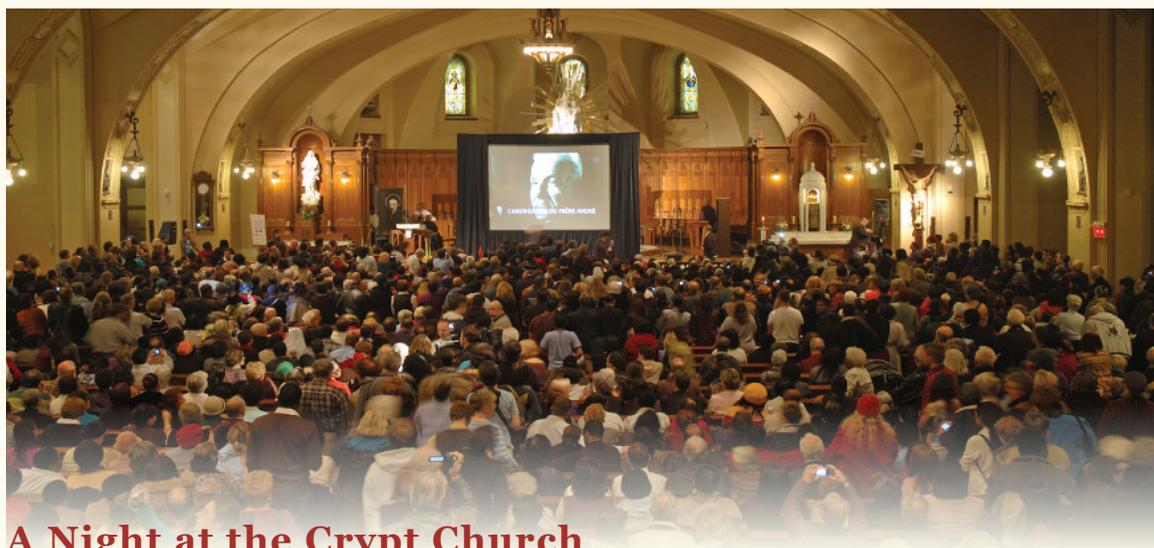


Photo: Alexandre Genest

A Night at the Crypt Church

Brother André's friends had been waiting for more than 70 years, and finally Rome announced on February 19, 2010, the canonization of the apostle of Saint Joseph. The Crypt Church of the Oratory had been chosen as a gathering place for the faithful from everywhere to celebrate this good news with the Congregation of Holy Cross. And what a crowd! From the 7:30 Mass on the evening of Saturday, October 16, 2010, the congregation literally overflowed on all sides. The celebration was followed by a prayer vigil which lasted until the live broadcast of the canonization Mass of Brother André in Saint Peter's Square in Rome at 4 a.m. The crowd was composed of people of all ages and conditions. With fervour, people sang, praised, and prayed. This memorable night reached its climax—and the full capacity of the Crypt Church—with the much-awaited solemn declaration. At the proclamation of the canonization of Brother André by Pope Benedict XVI, the crowd rose to spontaneously give the new Canadian saint a standing ovation. This Sunday, October 17, 2010, was certainly a great day in our history! ●

