

# The Friend of Brother André



FALL 2019

## Major development project RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES SHOW THEIR SUPPORT

In recognition of their support for the major development project, forty religious communities took part to a celebratory dinner at Saint Joseph's Oratory on Sunday, May 26, 2019.

Whether through a monetary donation or commitment to pray for the project's success, the congregations of women and men religious responded wholeheartedly to the call launched by the Oratory and its Foundation over the past two years.

"Each time we met, it resulted in a truly enriching exchange," said Father Claude Grou, CSC, in his remarks for the occasion. "You spoke to us about just how immensely important the Oratory is for our Church. You also shared with us very insightful comments that nourished our reflection on the Oratory's role in today's world."

And as a further token of recognition, the delegates of the communities each left with a memento figurine in the likeness of Saint Brother André, designed especially for the occasion, as well as a small bottle of Saint Joseph Oil.

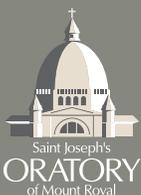


Some of the 130 guests at the recognition dinner with Father Claude Grou, CSC, Rector (centre), Father Mario Lachapelle, CSC, Provincial Superior and Father Jean Pierre Aumont, CSC, Vice-Rector, Development.

The Rector also shared with the guests his wish to see in the new Welcome Centre a space dedicated to religious communities so that visitors can be reminded of the communities' significant contribution throughout the history of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal.

"We wanted to meet with you today to say a heartfelt thank you. Through your generosity, we are already close to achieving our goal for this phase of the *Reaching New Heights* fundraising campaign. It's important that you be aware of just how truly grateful we are for everything you have done."

Father Claude Grou, CSC  
Rector



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Keep in touch with the Oratory thanks to our monthly newsletter!  
You will receive all news about our cultural events. And more!

Register on our website: [www.saint-joseph.org](http://www.saint-joseph.org)



## Spiritual friendship

During the initial investigation introducing the cause of the canonization of Brother André in Rome, Sister Marie-Anne, born Denise Leblanc, of the Sisters of Providence was invited to testify about the life of this brother she knew well.

They first met in 1922 when Sister Leblanc worked at the Hôpital des Incurables, a hospital run by her congregation. When the sister went to Brother André's office first time, she could hardly bring herself to speak a word. But during her second visit, Brother André invited her to overcome her shyness. "Why not simply ask for the grace you want to ask for?" he said, going straight to the heart of the matter.

And so began the long and candid friendship of two people devoted to caring for the sick and who had a similar spiritual drive grounded in the suffering and death of Christ.

Sister Leblanc recounted these facts with great simplicity during her testimony. She said, "I was perfectly comfortable talking to him as though he were my own brother. I would consult him about my own difficulties and also bring the sick to him."

Their spiritual journey was also a topic of discussion. She spoke of the support she received from him, "Brother André often encouraged me to strengthen my confidence in God and recommended that I pray with confidence...." She concluded her testimony with these words, "I must say that Brother André personally helped me overcome my trials by convincing me that the suffering and trials were intended by the good Lord, and that they had to be accepted as coming from Him."

This Sister of Providence confided that she could address the highly esteemed brother at the Oratory "as a brother." In turn, let us dare break free of our own silence and ask for grace from the one who is, for all and forever, **A friend. A brother. A saint.**

Father Claude Grou, CSC  
Rector

## Religious communities at work!



The **Petites Sœurs de la Sainte-Famille** (Little Sisters of the Holy Family) arrived at Saint Joseph's Oratory in 1912, just eight years after the original chapel was built. But they devoted themselves to so much more than domestic tasks. "The quality and constancy of their prayers were surely an inexhaustible source of grace for not only the staff, but also the crowds of pilgrims..." said Rector Jean-Pierre Aumont, CSC, when the sisters left the shrine on April 21, 1997. In the Crypt Church, a statue of their founder, Blessed Marie-Léonie Paradis, serves as tribute to their presence.



The **Missionary Exhibition** held at the Oratory from September 17 to October 4, 1942 highlighted the extraordinary contributions of religious communities of men and women over three centuries of Montreal history. This major event attracted more than 200,000 people to the kiosks of the religious communities, adding a touch of colour to the walls of the unfinished Basilica, creating a great historical and religious fresco!



Since its inception, Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal has been a favourite destination among local religious communities, who have diligently made an **annual pilgrimage** to the site. Depending on their respective ministries, these communities have regularly brought groups of students, of sick or elderly people to the Oratory and have contributed to promoting the Oratory and spreading devotion to Saint Joseph.



The **Grey Nuns of Montréal** donated the large lamps and other liturgical furnishings from their mother house to the Saint André Bessette Chapel, inaugurated on March 7, 2013. The back altar on which the tabernacle rests was once used for the reliquary of the remains of their founder, Saint Marguerite d'Youville. A truly worthy symbolic gift uniting the first two saints born in Canada. The chapel, located in the east transept of the Basilica, is a warm and welcoming place for recollection!



François Lemieux,  
father of four,  
realized just  
how much he  
owed God.

## A Bequest: For the Gift of Life!

The sudden and critical illnesses that affected three of my family members in 2017 caused me to seriously reflect on my life journey.

Deep within me, I realized that God, this invisible strength, and my guardian angel assigned at my birth, have been by my side, guiding and protecting me throughout my life. They have supported me, kept me alive and helped me overcome very challenging hardships: nearly fatal accidents, the loss of many jobs that I had been passionate about as well as a painful divorce that, after 27 years of marriage, nearly destroyed me.

“ I decided to make a donation for each year that God has given me to live. ”

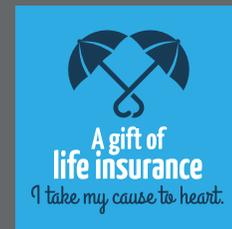
I understood that I had a debt, an enormous debt, which I owed God and my guardian angel, who have cared for me like a father and mother. And I know I can never repay God for this debt of life—it's impossible to repay.

Nevertheless, when drawing up my will, I decided to make a donation for each year that God has given me to live. This modest gift to Saint Joseph's Oratory, the worthy and solemn representative of God's spirit, is intended to help the shrine continue to offer spiritually supportive services that we all need as believers.

We must believe in God, in this strength within us, and in our guardian angel. We must never, ever give up hope. Life, God's gift to us, is truly marvellous. We simply need to listen, believe and always remember to thank them in whatever way we can; they are with us, and within us always.

*Adaptation of François Lemieux's personal story.*

Did you know that a life insurance policy that you no longer need can be used to make a large donation at a much smaller cost to you?



We are proud to participate in the **Leave a Legacy™** program, and we encourage you to consider a gift of life insurance as a practical way to support Saint Joseph's Oratory. For more information, please contact the Director of the Planned Giving Program.

**Leave a Legacy™:**  
A program of the  
Canadian Association  
of Gift Planners (CAGP)

Do you like this story about Mr. Lemieux? We'd like to know yours!

Marie-Anne Desjardins, Director, Planned Giving Program  
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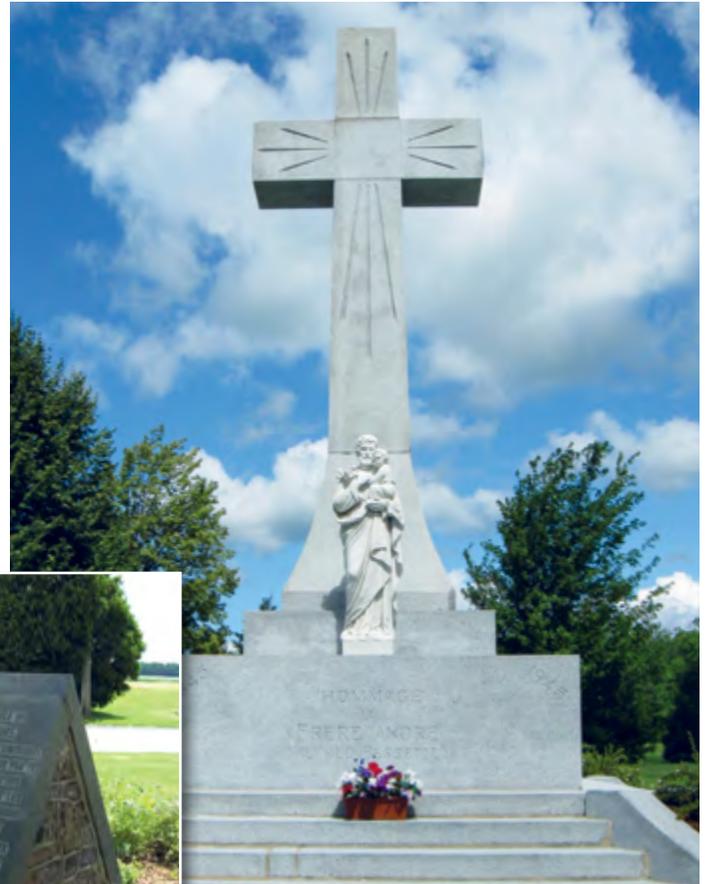
# From Mont-Saint-Grégoire to Mount Royal

Passing through the verdant Montérégie area along the eastern shore of the Richelieu River, you suddenly come upon a large cross that springs into view in the flat landscape surrounding mount Saint-Grégoire, renowned for its apples and maple products. The granite monument was erected in 1945 to mark the birthplace of Alfred Bessette, later to become the famous Brother André.

**A saint born on Grand-Bois Road is surely worth a detour and pause.**

On this point of land located 3.22 km from the parish church rises a small stele made of stones from the Bessette home. On one side is inscribed (in French): *"Here on August 9, 1845, was born and baptized ALFRED BESSETTE who became BROTHER ANDRÉ, of the Congregation of Holy Cross, founder of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal, and who died in Montréal on January 6, 1937."*

On the other side is written: *"The home where BROTHER ANDRÉ was born was made of wood. It consisted of a single room, measuring 20 feet by 17 feet. It burned down in 1919, and its only remnants are the stones placed under this granite. ALFRED BESSETTE, at age 4, left this house with his family to go live in Farnham."*



The stele erected on the birthplace of Brother André was made of stones from the former Bessette home destroyed by fire on August 3, 1919. The memorial park and the granite monument were unveiled in 1945.

## Honouring roots

Isaac Bessette and Clothilde Foisy had settled in those parts in 1832, the year after their marriage, and stayed there until 1850. Under the roof of that modest home, Alfred was born on August 9, 1845. He was such a sickly baby that they baptized him on the spot, so great was the fear for his life. The next day, the frail newborn was formally baptized by the parish priest, Father P.-A. Sylvestre, in the house that served as a chapel in the heart of the village.

Mont-Saint-Grégoire remembers its illustrious citizen whose sainthood was officially recognized and celebrated in 2010 when he was canonized. Making a pilgrimage to this site

is a way of honouring Brother André's roots, as modest as they were. It is also a way to acknowledge the grace that guided Alfred on God's path throughout his life. Lastly, it is a special opportunity to pray to him: *Saint Alfred of Mont-Saint-Grégoire, watch over our families; Saint André of Mount Royal, pray for us!*

Nathalie Dumas

**Let's meet there!**

## 75<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Annual Pilgrimage to Mont-Saint-Grégoire

**Sunday, August 25, 2019**

Mass at the parish church: 11:00  
Lunch at *La Goudrelle* restaurant [!]: 12:30  
Prayer at the memorial monument: 14:00

Charter bus transportation (departure from Saint Joseph's Oratory) and meal: \$30  
Tickets on sale at Saint Joseph's Oratory 514 733-8211, ext. 2792 or [pelerinage@osj.qc.ca](mailto:pelerinage@osj.qc.ca)





**A world-class project befitting of this heritage treasure.**

# OFFICIAL KICKOFF TO THE MAJOR PROJECT



The Mayor Valérie Plante highlighted that the City of Montréal is proud to take part in this great event. "An important tourist attraction like the Oratory deserves to be preserved, enhanced and kept alive".

Work on the Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal major development project got its official kickoff last March 1<sup>st</sup> in the presence of many dignitaries as well as several representatives of the business community. "When this project is complete," said the rector Claude Grou, CSC, "we'll be able to offer to visitors a greener, more user friendly and accessible site." A major project, a big worksite!



The **Reaching New Heights** campaign cabinet chaired by Mr. Guy Cormier, President and CEO of Desjardins Group, includes some of Quebec's great builders. Mr. Cormier is supported by Mr. Jean-Pierre Léger, Chairman of the Board, St-Hubert Foundation (at right) and by Mr. Serge Godin, CGI Founder and Executive Chairman of the Board, represented by Mr. Sébastien Barangé, CGI Vice-President (at left). They are in the company of Father Claude Grou, CSC, Rector of the Oratory.

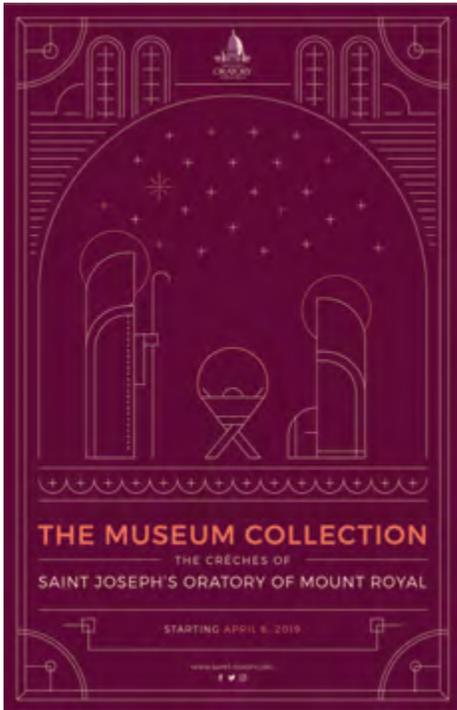


At the invitation of Rector Claude Grou, CSC, the dignitaries symbolically rang the Oratory's first bell to mark the start of work on the major development project, last March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Photos: Sébastien St-Jean

**Something is happening.**

# AT OUR CALENDAR THIS FALL



## Sunshine and Music

Free outdoor musical performances (jazz, pop, classical, choir) with the most beautiful sunsets in background.

Wednesdays at 19:00, Mezzanine Terrace  
Until September 11

## Journées de la culture

2019 theme: ENCOUNTERS – Developing relationships, building bridges  
[www.journeesdelaculture.qc.ca](http://www.journeesdelaculture.qc.ca)



September 27, 28, 29

## Sunday Concerts



### Fall Festival Series

In collaboration with the *Canadian International Organ Competition (CIOC)*  
From September 8 to October 27

### Montréal Bach Festival

Five concerts at the Oratory.  
[www.festivalbachmontreal.com](http://www.festivalbachmontreal.com)  
From November 3 to December 1<sup>st</sup>

Sundays at 15:30, Basilica



[www.saint-joseph.org](http://www.saint-joseph.org)

### Every donation is important

Contributions made to Saint Joseph's Oratory allow us to continue the work of Saint Brother André across time for the benefit of future generations.

## At the Oratory Museum

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

**The Museum Collection**  
– The Crèches of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal

**A World in a Crèche**

Open daily [\$], 10:00 to 16:30

## Annual Gathering

Eucharistic Celebration and fraternal banquet for the **Associates of Brother André** (by invitation).

Sundays October 6, 13, 20

*THANK YOU for taking part in the survey we conducted this past spring. We had a high response rate by mail and email. Your opinion is important to us! For those who responded, the gift-card draw will take place in early September.*



*Enjoy the breathtaking view from atop the dome of the Basilica, which will be open thanks to the major development project for Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. The project received financial support from all three levels of government and, more recently, from both religious communities and businesses. Soon, you will be able to make a donation toward this project as well, through a major public fundraising campaign slated for this fall. Take part in bringing Saint Brother André's work to fruition!*