

Détail of the stained glass window "Centre mondial de dévotion à saint Joseph", Guido Nincheri, 1964, Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal Collection (2017) - Photo: Daniel Abel

*Novena and Feast
of Saint Joseph*
March 10 to 19, 2024

JOSEPH, COMPANION OF OUR HISTORY

As a form of spiritual guidance, throughout the Novena to Saint Joseph, THE ORATORY magazine is offering short daily reflections on the figure, the presence and the action of Saint Joseph in our lives. These meditations will be developed by the guest preachers for the Novena that will be held March 10 to 18 at Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal.

We are also offering capsules on the devotion to Saint Joseph. Familiar acts of faith that are part of life at the Oratory are presented as ways for us to turn toward Saint Joseph.

We wish you all the best in the lead up to the great Feast on March 19 where we will celebrate *Saint Joseph, Companion of our history!*

TEXTS

Reflections: Fr. Patrice Bergeron and Fr. Denis Côté
Capsules: Nathalie Dumas

COMPANION OF OUR ANCESTORS

The year 2024 marks the 4th centenary of Canada's consecration to Saint Joseph. As early as 1624, the Recollects, the first European missionaries to arrive in Nouvelle-France, consecrated the young colony and the nascent Church of Canada to Saint Joseph. Our great country's patronage would later be formalized by two popes: Urban VIII in 1637 and Gregory XVI in 1834.

Joseph has long been a companion, watching over the faith of our ancestors from Europe and of the First Nations who found their Christian faith.

No wonder Joseph won the affection of our ancestors so early in our history! He who, chosen by God, had to show remarkable adaptability in the face of the vicissitudes of the Son of God's arrival on earth. He was able to bring out this country's inhabitant's courage and resilience by understanding and supporting their hard beginnings.

For 400 years, Saint Joseph has been a companion to our history and our personal stories. Today, we come to him from all horizons to invoke his name with confidence and to honour him in this Novena.

*Joseph, companion of our history,
you who have walked with us since the first day,
you who hear our prayers and requests,
watch over us and light our faithful path.*

Precious heritage

Religious art nourishes the faithful's devotion to Saint Joseph. At Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal, the figure of the great saint is present in many works: stained glass windows, bas-reliefs, murals, mosaics, Nativity scenes, monuments and statues. The Museum Collection also has treasures such as the stained glass window *Centre mondial de dévotion à saint Joseph*, chosen to illustrate the theme of the 2024 Novena (page 7). Like the stained glass below *Le Canada, consacré à saint Joseph*, these works were created in 1964 by Guido Nincheri for Saint-Vincent-de-Paul church in Québec City. When the parish was dissolved, the stained glass windows were removed and installed in a chapel belonging to the Religieux de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, who donated them to the Oratory in 2017.



Photo: Daniel Abel



Photo: Samuel Martin

Litany to Saint Joseph

“Among the prayers that are part of the expression of our veneration of Saint Joseph, we should highlight the Litany that are dedicated to him and that the Church suggests as an excellent way to manifest our love of this great Protector of our souls,” [translation] writes the editor of the *Annales de Saint Joseph* in the January 1926 issue.

“Under a simple exterior hides a deeply profound doctrine.” The concise prayer of the Litany first “lists the privileges that establish the Saint’s greatness”, then “another group of invocations mention some of the virtues that shone brightly in Saint Joseph,” and lastly it highlights “the main patronages he extends to us.” [translation] Their public recitation was authorized by Pope Pius X in a decree on March 18, 1909.

More recently, on May 1, 2021, seven new invocations were added to the Litany in honour of Saint Joseph, drawn from the popes’ interventions: Guardian of the Redeemer, Servant of Christ, Minister of Salvation, Support in Difficulties, Patron of Exiles, Patron of the Afflicted, and Patron of the Poor.

NOVENA REFLECTION DAY 2 – MARCH 11

COMPANION OF OUR CHURCH

Joseph, as we know, had the privilege of sharing a household with two exceptional people: Jesus and Mary. As Jesus’ “earthly” father, Joseph held him in his arms, helped him through his first steps, held his hand on the way to the synagogue or the market, taught him his Jewish prayers, and had the joy of finding him, as a teenager, after three days in the Jerusalem temple. What a role Joseph played as protector and educator throughout Jesus’ youth!

Joseph still plays this role in the growth of Jesus today, and will continue to do so until the end of time for his Body, the Church. We are its members and Risen Christ is its head. Patron of the Universal Church, Joseph is a companion chosen and appointed by God to care for the Church and the Kingdom’s growth within humanity.

Let us not be afraid to entrust our Church to the intercession of Saint Joseph, called to bear witness to the sublime hope that comes with knowing Jesus.

*Joseph, companion of our Church,
watches over each member of the Body of Christ.
May each and every Christian
contribute to revealing Jesus to the world,
the Light of the world!*

COMPANION OF OUR FAMILIES

Jesus probably always called Joseph “abba,” or “papa.” He would later address God, his Father, in the same way. It’s by the same word—so intimate!—that he invited his disciples to pray to God the Father: “*When you pray, say: Our Papa who art in heaven...*”

A father figure to Jesus, a paragon of the relationship that binds him to the Father and a devoted husband to the Virgin Mary, Joseph is an inspiring family man. In the midst of our busy lives and our struggles to balance work and family, in the midst of our concerns and worries about the future of our children or our ageing parents, it’s good to entrust our families to the example of love and trust in God that Joseph set.

Like the millions of Mount Royal pilgrims who pass through the Oratory’s Votive Chapel each year, contemplating Joseph with his calm, reassuring hands, as if to say “Don’t worry about a thing, I hear your prayers,” let us confide in this powerful heavenly companion!

*Joseph, companion of our families,
with confidence in your benevolent intercession,
we entrust them to you, as well as our
human and Christian communities.
May God’s love reign and be the leaven of our lives!*

March, Wednesdays and Fraternity!

The Bishops of Canada, who gathered in Québec City from September 10 to November 2, 1909, “called to mind the attachment of Catholics to Saint Joseph, chosen as the patron of the nascent Church of New France. The Bishops insisted that the month of Saint Joseph be celebrated wherever possible, and that Wednesday’s devotions, dedicated to Saint Joseph, be instilled in the faithful,” [translation] says the historian Denise Robillard in *Les Merveilles de l’Oratoire* (Fides, 2005).

Having participated in this plenary council, Father Georges-Auguste Dion, CSC, returned to the Oratory, encouraged and determined to establish a fraternity in honour of Saint Joseph. The superior wrote to Most Rev. Bruchési: “The time has come, I believe, to establish in this chapel, which was supposed to be greatly enlarged last year, an association in the name of the Saint Patriarch who is honoured here, in order to further encourage his veneration.”



The Archbishop of Montréal agreed to his request, and on November 21, 1909, the new Confraternity of Saint Joseph of Mount Royal welcomed its first 62 members: 30 men and 32 women. “Oh! All those who are not blind must admit that Saint Joseph wishes to be honoured here with a special veneration,” [translation] Father Dion, CSC, mentioned on this solemn day.



Still relevant!

“The *Annales du Mont-Royal* was the main voice of Saint Joseph in America,” [translation] wrote the publication’s editor, Father Marcel Plamondon, CSC, in 1952. Today, with a century of history, THE ORATORY magazine has tirelessly sought to offer content to get to know and love Saint Joseph: reflections, decrees, homilies, testimonies of faith, prayers, stories, reports, all while incorporating various illustrations and works of art.

Most Rev. Paul Bruchési, Archbishop of Montréal, saw this publication as a way of allowing pilgrims to the Oratory “to return in their mind and follow from afar the extraordinary movement of devotion and trust brought there every day by the crowds from all over Canada,” [translation] he wrote in his blessing published in the first French issue, in January 1912. Fifteen years later, an English version was created.

The magazine continues to reach its subscribers three times a year and offers a spiritual reflection and an encounter with Saint Joseph and Saint Brother André. Sent out to a number of countries, it remains a special link with all friends of Saint Joseph’s Oratory of Mount Royal.

NOVENA REFLECTION DAY 4 – MARCH 13

COMPANION OF WORKERS

The Gospels tell us very little about Joseph. How do we know, for example, that he was a carpenter in Nazareth? From a single verse from Matthew (13:55) and perhaps another from Mark, suggesting that he passed his trade on to Jesus (6:3). Whatever the case, he certainly had to support his family through his work. Hence why the Church proposes him as the model and patron saint of workers.

Work, carried out in decent conditions, is a dignified reality, an important dimension of our human existence that certainly helps us in developing our gifts and talents, putting ourselves at the service of others and society, beyond earning us our daily bread.

The word “companion,” this Novena’s recurring theme, comes from two Latin words: *cum* (with) and *panis* (bread). Therefore, a companion is someone with whom we share bread, the bread that symbolizes daily life. Joseph’s hard work earned him the bread of his family. He can certainly be a companion to all those who work and all those who are looking for a job.

*Joseph, companion of working men and women,
we entrust to your prayers all our worries about
work, income and achievements.
Bring peace and security to our homes and hearts,
trusting in God’s Providence.*

COMPANION OF THE SICK

Like every human being, Saint Joseph must have been through hard times and faced many challenges. He is often invoked as the Model of workers, the Support of families, but also as the Hope of the sick and dying. His compassion, strength and protection are qualities that make him particularly close to people facing illness and suffering.

The proximity between Saint Joseph and the sick was evident at the Mount Royal Oratory from its humble beginnings. Brother André knew how to welcome them with compassion. He recommended that they pray to Saint Joseph, in whom they could find hope and serenity in the midst of illness and hardship. Some left healed or freed of their burdens.

Even today, turning to Saint Joseph can be effective when we face difficult situations that make us vulnerable, such as death, job loss or separation. What's more, he can support us through our illnesses, limitations, weaknesses, crises and addictions.

*Joseph, companion of the sick,
bolster us in our trials,
join us in our vulnerabilities.*

*Intercede for all our loved ones afflicted by illness,
that they may receive the grace of serenity.*

Saint Joseph Oil

Saint Joseph Oil is not a treatment. Nor is it a preparation with curative powers, to say nothing of a magical practice. It must be viewed as a gesture of faith. Brother André was inspired by a devotion that he heard was already being practised in France. He took a bit of oil from a lamp

that was burning in front of a statue of Saint Joseph. He offered it to sick people telling them to rub it on their aching body and to pray to Saint Joseph to heal them.

This tradition continues today at Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. A basin of ordinary vegetable oil is fixed in front of a statue of Saint Joseph, and a wick burns night and day as a kind of perpetual votive

lamp. The oil is then put in bottles and made available to pilgrims.

Sometimes, recovery and healing occur, as with a boy who was in a serious car accident at the end of the 1990s. As a last resort, given that there was no hope left for the child's life, friends of the family stopped to pray at the Oratory and brought the parents Saint Joseph Oil, a medal and a prayer card of Brother André. It was this healing deemed "scientifically inexplicable" that opened the way for the canonization of Blessed André Bessette, Brother of Holy Cross.



Photo: Paul Simon



Prayer intentions

"I remember one day I consulted Brother André to ask for his help with business problems," said Émile Gadbois. "He told me, 'Take your pencil and write this down: *Good Saint Joseph, do for me as you would do if you yourself were here on earth in my place...Saint Joseph, answer me.*' Then he recommended that I place this prayer at the foot of the statue of Saint Joseph." [translation]

This practice recommended by Brother André continues today. Pilgrims to the Oratory are invited to write their most cherished wishes on slips of paper and then place them at the foot of Saint Joseph. In this way, the person not only carries this prayer in their heart, they not only speak it aloud, they write it on a tangible medium. A concrete gesture that is full of trust. Intentions also reach the Oratory by mail, by email and through its website.

The March-April 2006 issue of L'ORATOIRE magazine contained a prayer intention coupon inviting subscribers to send in their written requests and pray for each other to form a large spiritual chain. A few short days after the magazine was delivered to homes, numerous prayer intention coupons arrived at the Oratory filled out with requests of Saint Joseph.

NOVENA REFLECTION DAY 6 – MARCH 15

COMPANION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The work of art "Angels Unawares" that stands in front of the Oratory depicts a large boat whose passengers are migrants from all eras, countries and religions. Among them are Joseph and Mary, carrying the infant Jesus in her arms.

Yes, Joseph too had to uproot his family and establish a new home for Mary and Jesus, in order to keep them safe. Pope Francis mentioned that he was a "persecuted and courageous" migrant at the general audience on December 29, 2021. Joseph reacted "to fear with the courage to trust in God's Providence." Faced with the adversities that life has in store for us, on the rocky paths of our lives, we are invited to behave like Joseph by bravely daring to trust in God.

How many people are torn from their homes and communities, how many others risk their lives to escape persecution, misfortune and hunger, or flee their native countries because of war, hatred or poverty. For all victims of terror, intimidation and violence, forced to leave; may Saint Joseph help them find the courage to face the unknown with confidence.

*Joseph, companion of migrants and refugees,
"Support them in their difficulties,
strengthen them in hope,
and let them find welcome and solidarity."*

(Pope Francis)

COMPANION ON THE PATH OF FAITH

Joseph welcomed God's presence in his life. On his word, he committed himself to the Incarnation of his Son: the most unfathomable of mysteries. He accepted God's plan without protest or question, and went ahead, happy to walk in the light because God was there.

However, his journey of faith has not been an easy one! Pope Francis reminds us that believing does not mean finding facile and comforting solutions. "The faith Christ taught us is what we see in Saint Joseph. He did not look for shortcuts, but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it." (Apostolic Letter *With a Father's Heart* – *Patris Corde*, 2020)

In turn, we are invited to embrace the faith that was his, so that God may dwell within us and we may be faithful to his will. Sometimes we're a little shaky in our Christian life. We believe in God, in Christ, in the Church; but we often live with faith on the sidelines.

*Joseph, companion on the path of faith,
help us to move forward with open eyes,
trusting in the Father who beckons.
Through faith, may we always sense God's hand
in events, and may it guide our daily actions.*

Luminous prayers

A common practice at Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal involves lighting a votive candle or a votive lamp in front of Saint Joseph. Pilgrims wish to leave a visible mark of the prayer they make to God through the intercession of Saint Joseph. It is said that their prayer and their presence "are prolonged" in the Oratory through this lit candle.

The Votive Chapel, also known as the Chapel of ex-votos, is designed precisely for this type of act. Saint Joseph is honoured under different names, eight titles that the Christian tradition has attributed to Saint Joseph and that the artist Joseph Guardo illustrated in bas-reliefs: Model of Workers, Mainstay of Families, Guardian of the Pure in Heart, Terror of Demons, Our Consolation in Suffering, Hope of the Sick, Protector of the Church



Photo: Nathalie Dumas

and Patron Saint of the Dying. In the shadows of this long inner gallery between the Crypt Church and the rock of Mount Royal shine 10,000 small flames. Each of them symbolizes a silent prayer rising up to God. These flames, these prayers represent just as many people and episodes in their life. Joy meets distress; exultation is side by side with suffering; hope defends itself from despair. All of these flames become one united prayer from a faithful and interdependent community.



Photo: Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal

Celebrating with Saint Joseph

The Religious of Holy Cross at the Oratory in charge of the Centre for Research and Documentation on Saint Joseph took steps in January 1961 to have Saint Joseph's name added to the Order of the Mass. Their petition—signed by a number of cardinals, archbishops and bishops—sought to have this liturgical question added to the agenda for the Second Vatican Council. The response arrived faster than anticipated and in an unexpected way. A personal decree from Pope John XXIII announced on November 13, 1962, that the name of Saint Joseph would be inserted in the Canon of the Mass.

Therefore, in Eucharistic Prayer I, after the mention of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her spouse, Saint Joseph, would be named. "By adding his name to the Canon of the Mass, the Church wants us to understand that he played an active part in the mystery of the Redemption," [translation] pointed out Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, Archbishop of Montréal.

On May 1, 2013, Pope Francis specified by decree that the mention of Saint Joseph's name would be added to Eucharistic Prayers II, III and IV. This decision supported the practice already in place at the Oratory of naming Saint Joseph at all masses celebrated there.

NOVENA REFLECTION DAY 8 – MARCH 17

COMPANION IN HOPE

Hope cannot be taken for granted. It's easier to despair, to let ourselves fall into sadness or weariness. How many are discouraged? Consciously or not, we sometimes forget Hope and wonder: "What's the point? What's the point in going on?"

We brood, we doubt, we fear, we no longer believe in tomorrow, we lose our joy and our ability to bounce back. It's like turning off the light on your own life. We lose our shine!

Saint Joseph can teach us to hope against all odds. Through the unpredictable events that he faced, his only strength was an unshakable Hope in the Lord's benevolence and faithfulness. He knew that God would have the last word in whatever happened to him.

Beyond all weaknesses, there is God's faithfulness, and it is on Him that we wish to rely. In the days when we despair, God is already on the march towards us, running to meet us to give us his love, his joy and his peace.

*Joseph, companion in Hope,
shows us how to open ourselves up to this Hope
that will transform us, filling us
with the strength of confidence and the desire
to move forward.*

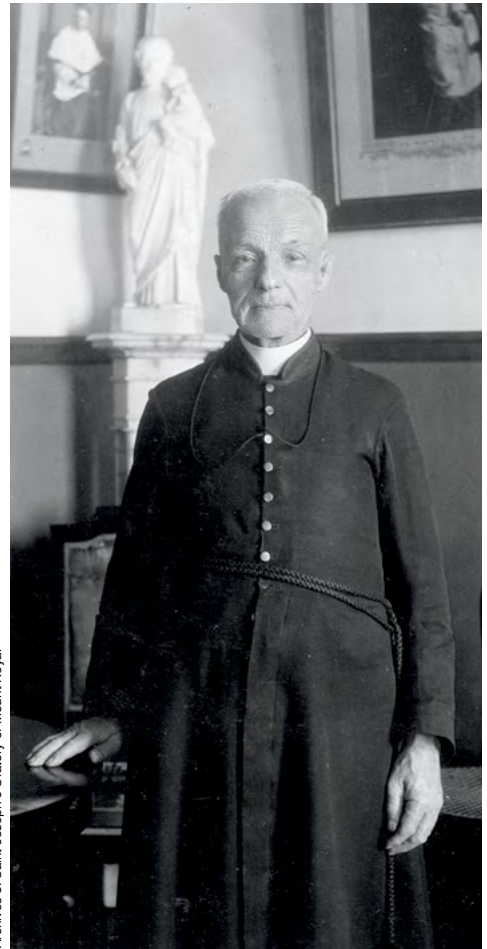
COMPANION OF SAINT BROTHER ANDRÉ

Brother André, a listening heart. A man of prayer and great simplicity, he embodied John the Baptist's words to Jesus: "He must increase but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). His reputation as a miracle worker and saint spread quickly. Yet the humble religious man never even sought recognition, let alone glory. He never stopped calling himself "the instrument of Saint Joseph," his companion in spiritual life.

For him, Saint Joseph was a model of patience, hard work and dedication. This father figure accompanied him from childhood to the end of his life. He firmly believed in his intercession. When people showed gratitude for a cure or favour they had obtained, he urged them to go and thank Saint Joseph. "It is he who obtains miracles for us!" he insisted.

Brother André dedicated his life to helping people in need, praying for them and with them, encouraging them to have faith in God's tenderness. Saint Brother André welcomes each and every one of us still today. Patiently, he listens to the story of our lives and our requests. And as in the past, he invites us to turn to Joseph with confidence.

*Saint Joseph, Husband of the Virgin Mary,
Guardian of the Son of God,
Protector of the Church, Patron Saint of Canada,
Companion of our history and our lives,
Friend of Brother André, pray for us.*



Archives of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal

A medal in hand

Brother André suggested always having a medal of Saint Joseph in your hand, especially when finalizing an important matter. This advice wasn't intended to give any type of power to the object but more so to remind people to place the situation in the hands of God through the intercession of Saint Joseph.

To meet the demand created by this recommendation, Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal issued several models of medals over the years. The medal of Saint Joseph has remained a popular product in its gift shop, which offers something for every price level and every taste. Modest or chic, for whoever wears the medal, it is worth its weight in gold!

JOSEPH, COMPANION OF OUR HISTORY

Good Saint Joseph, Spouse of Mary!

For Jesus, you are
the human face of God the Father.

For Brother André, you are
his friend, confidant, and guide.

For our ancestors, you are
an unparalleled Protector.

We celebrate you
as a companion in our story.

Through and with you,
we thank the Father of all mercy,
from whom comes every perfect gift.

Through and with you,
we magnify your Son Jesus,
the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

With you and your wife Mary,
we recognize that it is
the Spirit of God at work
in the heart of every person
who works for peace, compassion,
solidarity, and justice.

On this fourth centenary
as our patron,
we remember the wonders of God
in the history of our country,
our Church, our families
and in our own lives.

Good Saint Joseph,
companion in our story,
walk with us, help us to live
better in peace and harmony.
Inspire us in the ways of the love
of God and our neighbour
in our daily lives.

Amen!

Novena to Saint Joseph March 10 to 18, 2024

Preaching in English during the Mass, each day at **12:15 p.m.**
Except on Sundays, March 10 and 17 at 11:15 a.m.

March 10 to 12 – Fr. Raymond Lafontaine, EV



Ordained to the priesthood in 1991, Raymond Lafontaine was associate pastor at St. Luke's Parish in Montréal before undertaking doctoral studies in moral theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He was chaplain and member of the Theological Studies Department at Concordia University, and taught at the Grand Séminaire. He is currently Episcopal Vicar for the English-speaking faithful and Director of the Office for English Pastoral Services for the Archdiocese of Montréal.

March 13 to 15 – Fr. Tiburtius Fernandez, SMA



Born in Sri Lanka, Tiburtius Fernandez did his studies and seminary in India. He obtained a Master's degree in biblical studies from St. Peter's Pontifical Theological Institute, Bangalore. He served as a missionary in India and Benin. Since 2004, he has lived in Canada. For five years, he ministered at Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. For nine years, he was the Provincial Superior of the Fathers of the Society of African Missions (SMA) for Canada. He is now administrator of St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish in Montréal.

March 16 to 18 – Fr. C. Anthony Atansi



Dr. Chukwuemeka Anthony Atansi is an Igbo Christian theologian. He obtained a Doctor of Sacred Theology (Ph.D. and S.T.D) in 2020 from KE Leuven, Belgium. His doctoral dissertation is entitled "Christ, the Image of Social Transformation: Towards a Transformative Christology in the African Context." He is a priest from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Akwa, Nigeria and is currently serving as Chaplain for McGill's Newman Centre and Adjunct Professor in the School of Religious Studies of McGill University.

Feast of Saint Joseph March 19

Solemn Masses

10 a.m., 2:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m. (in French, Basilica)
with the participation of Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal

11:15 a.m. (in English, Crypt Church)