

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Saint Joseph's Oratory's impressive carillon is back from France after a major restoration

Montréal, June 17, 2023 — In a ceremony held this morning, Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal celebrated the return of its impressive carillon from France, where it had been undergoing a major restoration since 2019. A blessing was also conducted.

The carillon is the only instrument of its kind in Québec and is a major part of our cultural heritage. In addition to the 56 restored bells, the carillon will have six new bells, including its heaviest—a bourdon with a unique deep sound. The keyboard and transmission system were also rebuilt.

All of the carillon's bells were cast at Fonderie Paccard, a French foundry and bell maker that has been in operation since 1796. The bells were originally intended for the Eiffel Tower but were loaned to Saint Joseph's Oratory in 1955 for its 50th anniversary before generous donors offered them as a gift.

"The return of our carillon is a major moment for Saint Joseph's Oratory," says Father Patrick Vézina, C.S.C., director of the Associates of Brother André. "This instrument is a source of pride because it is a unique part of Québec's heritage. Their sounds delight audiences, whether in sacred chants, folk tunes, ancient melodies or contemporary repertoire. We would like to thank the donors who made the restoration of this beautiful carillon possible."

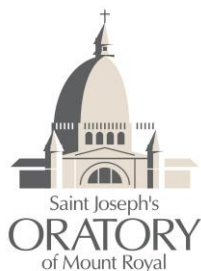
"We are happy and proud to see our *bronze daughters* rejoin the Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal bell tower, along with many new additions. Since 1796, more than 120,000 of our bells have been ringing out around the world, adding rhythm to life in cities and towns," says Anne Paccard, communications manager at Maison Paccard.

A special opportunity for the public

For this rare occasion, the bells will be on display this weekend on the outdoor terrace in front of the Oratory's Crypt Church. The public will be able to get a close-up look before they're hoisted into the new welcome pavilion's bell tower on Monday, June 19.

A musical instrument in a class of its own

The Oratory's titular carillonist Andrée-Anne Doane is thrilled with its return: "Rebuilding the carillon has made it much stronger, and the six new bells expand its musical repertoire. It's a great privilege for me to play this wonderful instrument again, the only one of its kind in Québec."



The addition of the six new bells was made possible by the Oratory's successful fundraising campaign. The 62 bronze bells make up an instrument that weighs nearly 19,000 kg. The largest bell, the bourdon, weighs 3,600 kg, while the smallest weighs just 5 kg.

Visitors are often surprised to learn that the bells do not move. Sound is produced by bell clappers activated by steel cables connected to the keyboard where the carillonist sits. To play, the carillonist uses fists or open hand to push the wooden levers, also known as batons, that make up the two rows on the keyboard. In addition, there are pedal keys connected to the keyboard's two lowest octaves. Because the instrument is so rare, there are only three active carillonists in Québec, including the Oratory's titular carillonist and her recently graduated son.

The restoration of the carillon is part of a major development project that includes the construction of a new welcome pavilion, reconfiguration of the gardens, renovation of a museum area and development of the basilica's dome.

The Oratory's rebuilt carillon will start playing when the new welcome pavilion opens in autumn 2023.

Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal – www.saint-joseph.org

Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is the largest shrine in the world dedicated to Saint Joseph, serving as guardian of a precious material and spiritual heritage. It receives some 2 million pilgrims and visitors each year, making it a unique spiritual and tourist destination and an unmistakable symbol of Montréal. Open to the world, it is a place of healing and peace where everyone finds an unconditional welcome.

Archive photos and photos showing the restoration are available [here](#).

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